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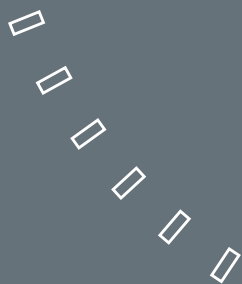
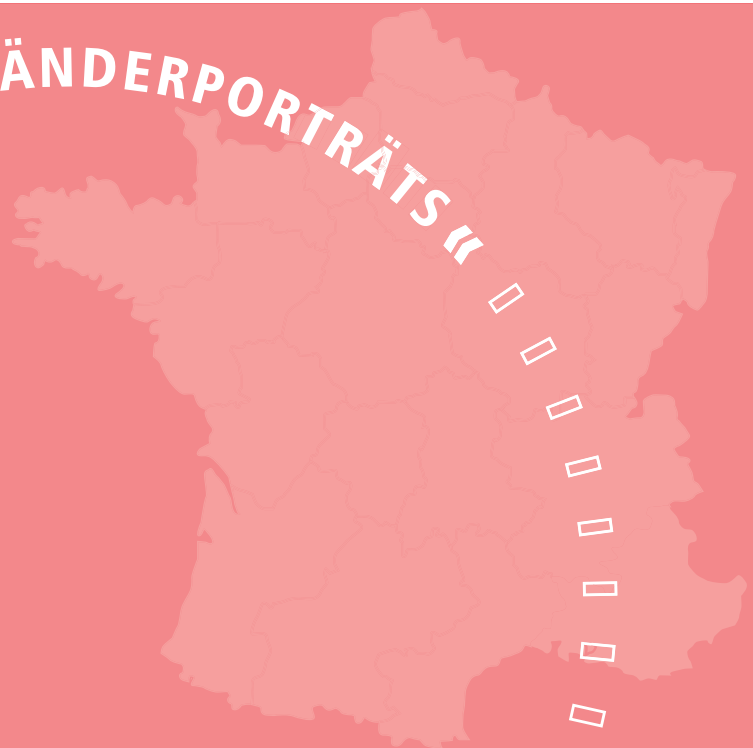
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Silke Schreiber-Barsch

# Adult and Continuing Education in France

» LÄNDERPORTRÄTS «



**Länderporträt**

**Silke Schreiber-Barsch**

# **Adult and Continuing Education in France**

**Open Access**



## Country Reports on Continuing Education

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## Preliminary Notes

The interconnectedness of adult education, learning and its socio-political environment (persons and organizations, aims and educational concepts, as well as the labor market) is closer than that of universities and schools. Political, social, economic and cultural aspects of the particular national environment not only provide the general framework for adult education and learning, but are also under their influence.

There are various reasons for that. First of all, adult education has become an integral part of people's lives. Learning is considered a lifelong process in which knowledge, new competencies, skills and behavioral patterns are acquired. In addition, learning occurs not only on an individual level, but all economic development as well as democratic participation of the individual requires formal and informal learning.

Hence, the appearance of adult education and learning can be quite interlaced, confusing and complex. It varies from presentations, weekend seminars, courses of longer duration up to long-term vocational training. It occurs in companies, in educational organizations, at home, in cultural institutions and in the media. It is subject to different political and legal contexts. Sometimes, adult education is financed by official or state funds, sometimes by project resources; increasingly it is structured by the market.

The various "systems" of adult education that are embedded in national and regional traditions are hard to compare with each other. This becomes obvious when supra-regional and transnational projects with common interests and experiences are aspired to. The European Union is an excellent example for a process in which such differences are becoming more and more visible.

Stakeholders in research, practice and politics of adult education are more and more and more often confronted with the necessity to communicate and cooperate with partners in other nations on a professional level. Here, content, funding, reputation and interests become relevant. Cooperation and communication may be inefficient if the knowledge about conditions and structures in other European regions is insufficient. Especially when it is about details in cooperative structures, a lack of knowledge can turn into a problem.

If you want to cooperate with European partners, an overview about the situation of adult education and adult learning in other countries can be very helpful, since it puts partial information into context. This can be the base for further exploration.

The German Institute for Adult Education (DIE) – Leibniz Centre for Lifelong Learning continues its established series of reports on adult education in other European countries with this volume on "Adult and Continuing Education in France". Volumes on Austria, Denmark, England, Germany, Greece, Spain and Switzerland and Cyprus have been published in the last ten years. This loose series shall be continued. All volumes about non-German speaking countries will be published in English and Open Access. Readers who prefer traditional books may order a print version for a small amount from W. Bertelsmann Verlag.



The series “Länderporträt” by the DIE provides a beneficial base for European adult education politics and one’s individual practice in continuing education.

*Josef Schrader*

German Institute for Adult Education –  
Leibniz-Centre for Lifelong Learning

# 1. Introduction

## General Information

The French Republic (*République française*) is by area one of the largest countries of the European Union (EU), situated at the Western edge of Europe with both Atlantic and Mediterranean coastlines. France consists of territory in Western Europe (Metropolitan France; *la France métropolitaine*) and, as remnants of its colonial history, a number of overseas departments and territories (European territory: 540,030 km<sup>2</sup>; total land area: 674,843 km<sup>2</sup>). These overseas departments and territories (*la France d'outre-mer*) are an integral part of the French sovereign state, thus of the EU, and substantially influence the traits of French migration society, its administrative structure and also the education system.

The pathways of history have formed fundamental features of today's French Republic: Dating back to its roots in the Iron Age, France's rich history has seen a medieval Kingdom, its first colonial empire from the 17th century onwards and the downfall of the monarchy in the French Revolution (1789–1799). The revolutionary spirit grounded the republican and democratic legacy of the “Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen” (1789), one of the earliest documents on human rights, and the national maxim “liberty, equality, fraternity” (*liberté, égalité, fraternité*), which is still widely recalled on coins, stamps, school-buildings or monuments today. The preamble of the current French Constitution, signed in 1958 and inaugurating the so-called Fifth Republic, refers to both the Declaration and the national maxim and has established France as a unitary, secular and democratic state with a semi-presidential system of government.

In comparison to other European countries, France is characterized by its large territorial area (Metropolitan France) with a comparatively low population density of 120 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>, counting in total a population of around 64.2 million (January 2015, Metropolitan France; Germany: over 80 million in 2014, 231 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>). The population, furthermore, is very unevenly distributed over the French metropolitan territory: The agglomeration of 2.25 million inhabitants (2011) distinguishes the greater area of the capital Paris as the political, economic and cultural center of the country. The administrative structure of this very centrally organized state is characterized by relatively small administrative units, with the total territory divided into 27 regions (22 in Metropolitan France, five located overseas) and further into 101 departments and up to 36,697 communes as the smallest unit (Germany: about 11,000 communes) (see fig. 1). However, the character of the centralistic state system should not be applied to the structure of its public administration. Because of its small territorial units, there exists a large number of locally elected political representatives who seek to ensure local and regional interests. These local and regional authorities have gradually gained power as a result of three decentralization reforms since the beginning of the 1980s (*Acte I* (1981–84), *Acte II* (2004), *Acte III* (2013)).

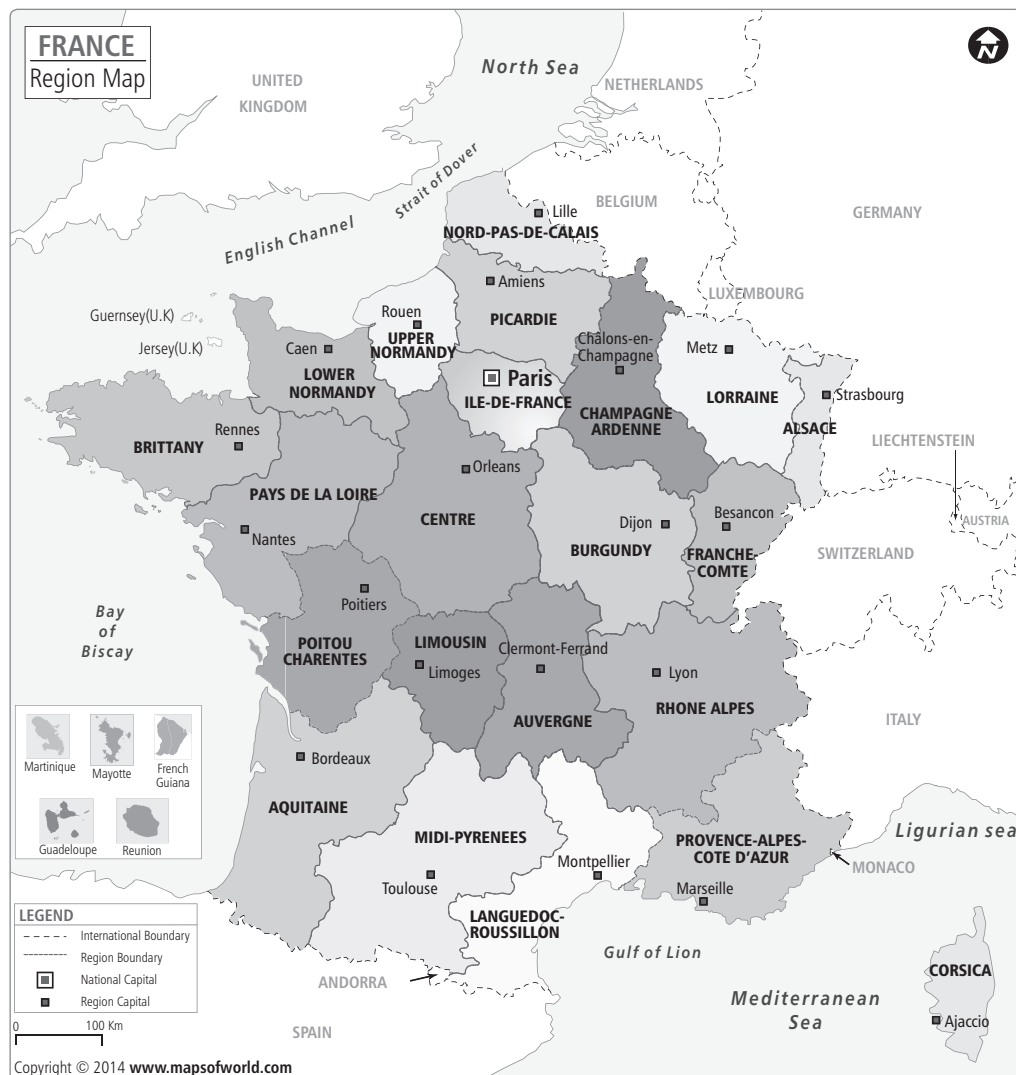


Figure 1: France with its 22 mainland regions and 5 overseas regions (Source: www.mapsofworld.com)

Note: From January 2016, a reform of the territorial division (aimed at making financial savings) will regroup the 22 mainland regions to 13.

According to the Constitution, the official language in France is French. Yet its colonial history and centuries of natural migration throughout the European territory have shaped today's diverse French migration society (cf. Cahiers français 383, 2014). Whereas Germany has the lowest of the European countries' birth rates, thus representing Europe's demographic trend towards ageing societies, France is responsible for almost all natural population growth in the EU with a natural growth rate (excess of births over deaths) of 3.4 percent in 2013 (Metropolitan France)<sup>1</sup>. Immigration serves as a significant contributor to this demographic stability: In 2013, 28 percent of newborns in Metropolitan France

1 <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=de&pcode=t-ps00007&plugin=1>

had at least one foreign-born parent (parents born in overseas territories are considered as born in France)<sup>2</sup>. The bottom line is that France has one of the highest average life expectancies at birth in the EU with 79 years for men and 85 years for women.<sup>3</sup>

French society is ethnically diverse, with sizable minorities in particular of Italian, North African and Sub-Saharan African origin. However, Constitutional law dating back to the 1789 revolution prohibits the state from collecting data on ethnicity and ancestry. Available data shows, for example, a figure of around 200,000 legal immigrants annually.<sup>4</sup> Alongside a more rigid immigration policy in recent years, illegal or irregular immigration (according to the French term “irrégulière”) has risen and numbers a figure of anywhere between 200,000 and 400,000 so-called *sans-papiers* (literally “without papers”) in France, though numbers are only rough estimates (cf. Secrétariat général, 2011, pp. 64–72).

Furthermore, the Constitution states that France is a secular country with a right to freedom of religion, defining religion as being of a solely private nature and demanding religious neutrality of the state. Its policy on religion is characterized by the concept of *laïcité* (secularism), granting a strict institutionalized separation of church and state, and dating back to a law passed in 1905. Despite these constitutional guarantees, the French policy remains controversial and public opinion is divided on the handling of religious issues (cf. Cahiers français 385, 2015), for example following the ban on wearing “conspicuous religious symbols in schools” (*Loi no 2004-228 du 15 mars 2004*) or on the wearing in public of face-covering headwear, including veils or masks, adopted in 2010 (*Loi interdisant la dissimulation du visage dans l'espace public*).

## Economic and Social Situation

The French welfare state is organized as a social security system (*la Sécurité sociale*) with its origins dating back to the 19th century and to the influences of the Bismarckian system. In 1945, France launched a standard insurance system. The aftermath of the Second World War marked the beginning of *The Glorious Thirty* (1945–1975; *les Trente Glorieuses*). During this thirty-year period the French economy experienced strong growth and the era symbolizes three decades of economic prosperity, a high rise of French working class wages and a well-developed social security system. Economic growth and increased labor demand led, as in many other European countries, to bilateral agreements on the recruitment of migrant workers. These years are closely linked with the name of Charles de Gaulle (1890–1970), who was head of several governments, serving as the 18th President of France from the declaration of the Fifth Republic in 1958 until his resignation in 1969. In these decades, the country

2 [www.insee.fr/fr/themes/tableau.asp?reg\\_id=0&ref\\_id=NAISLIEUNAISPAR](http://www.insee.fr/fr/themes/tableau.asp?reg_id=0&ref_id=NAISLIEUNAISPAR)

3 [www.insee.fr/fr/themes/tableau.asp?reg\\_id=0&ref\\_id=NATnon02229](http://www.insee.fr/fr/themes/tableau.asp?reg_id=0&ref_id=NATnon02229)

4 [www.immigration.interieur.gouv.fr/fr/Info-ressources/Statistiques/Tableaux-statistiques/L-admission-au-sejour-les-titres-de-sejour](http://www.immigration.interieur.gouv.fr/fr/Info-ressources/Statistiques/Tableaux-statistiques/L-admission-au-sejour-les-titres-de-sejour)

became highly urbanized, irretrievably experiencing a swelling rural exodus and conurbation in urban areas like the capital, Paris. De Gaulle's presidency also marked the era of decolonization: The territories of the Second French colonial empire (with its peak in the 19th and early 20th centuries) were granted their long awaited independence and the Algerian War was ended in 1962.

In the post-Gaullist era, as in many other European countries since the 1973 oil crisis, economic prosperity dwindled significantly and exposed the welfare state to profound reforms of its various sectors (e. g. claims for unemployment benefits have been progressively reduced since the end of the 1970s). One of the responses to the economic crisis was the ending of recruitment of migrant workers from the mid-1970s onwards. However, the majority of migrant workers already recruited did not view returning to their countries of origin as an option – they wanted to stay in France and reunify with their families. As in German policy at that time, France finally acknowledged the long-term stay perspective and the family ties of its immigrants, allowing them to permanently settle in France with their families and to acquire French citizenship. It replaced the public strategy of cultural *assimilation* (expecting the adaption to customs, values and norms of French society as it stands) with the concept of *integration* (the concept does not demand the total abandonment of distinctive cultural identity and traditions, but seeks to integrate them into the assumed majority population), finally symbolized by the newly established position of a Secretary-General for Integration in 1989 (cf. République Française, 2012). Today, the discourse deals with concepts of multiculturalism (*multiculturalisme*) and interculturalism (*interculturalisme*) (cf. Cahiers français 385, 2015).

Recent migration policies constitute a two-fold structure: The National Agency for Social Cohesion and Equal Opportunities (*Agence nationale pour la cohésion sociale et l'égalité des chances* – ACSE) is responsible for issues concerning persons who migrated to France long ago; the National Agency for the Reception of Foreigners and for Migration (*Agence nationale de l'accueil des étrangers et des migrants* – ANAEM), introduced in 2005, is in charge of obligatory individual “contracts for reception and integration” for each person newly arrived (*Contrat d'accueil et d'intégration obligatoire; loi du 24 juillet 2006 relative à l'immigration et à l'intégration*). Such a contract, similar to citizenship tests in other countries but without the final test element, is composed of teaching on citizenship education (republican values and institutions), on French language and includes documentation of professional competences (*bilan de compétences*, see chapter 3).

The French economic system is a mixed economy. Its market economy features, like government intervention in key segments (via e. g. majority ownership in the infrastructural sector), strong regulatory oversight and state-run enterprises have been loosened slightly and transferred to private business in recent years. Traditionally, French trade unions have a strong voice. This is based on the statutory powers they enjoy as employee representatives in the workplace (in firms with over 50 members of staff) or in the French health and social security system, and which allow them a substantial say in the daily running of enterprises. Their mobilizing and campaigning

capacities are regularly demonstrated in the public sphere, not least since the global financial and economic crisis of 2008, which has not left France unaffected and has provoked reforms in the areas traditionally praised as achievements of the welfare state (cf. Cahiers français 383, 2014). Issues under discussion are e. g. the 35-hour working week (granted by *Loi Aubry I; II* in 1998/2000; then meant to reduce the unemployment rate), or the – in European comparison relatively low – statutory retirement age of 60.

France's gross domestic product (GDP; 2014: 38,163 US dollars/capita; Germany 2014: 44,190 US dollars/capita)<sup>5</sup> indicates strong economic performance, whereas figures also point to a massive, yet slightly diminishing government deficit which ranges above the limits of the European Stability and Growth Pact (2013: - 4.121 % of GDP; 2009: - 7.162 % of GDP; Germany 2013: 0.148 % of GDP).<sup>6</sup> Combating unemployment remains one of the main challenges. France has suffered for a long time from one of the highest unemployment rates among the EU member states (2014: 9.86 % of labor force, 2003: 8.46 % of labor force; Germany 2014: 4.98 % of labor force).<sup>7</sup> These figures are largely due to the comparatively high youth unemployment rate, with 23.9 percent of the youth labor force (15–24 year olds) unemployed in 2013 (Germany 2013: 7.9 % of the youth labor force).<sup>8</sup>

## The Education System

The deeply ingrained traditions of republican values, including the principles of *laïcité* (secularism) and the national maxim of *égalité* (equality in general and equal treatment of all citizens), have shaped the development of the modern French education system and thus represent the crucial framework for understanding the adult and continuing education sector. The education system is characterized by a public, centralized standard system until the end of secondary level 1 (cf. Cabanel, 2005; Hörner & Many, 2010; Kimmel & Uterwedde, 2012; Brüssow, 2013; Cahiers français 383, 2014).

The school as a public institution is bound to religious neutrality, which is expressed in the systematic exclusion of ethnic, religious and/or culturally defined categories in daily school procedures and formal structures (e. g. no religious instruction is given). This tradition of *laïcité* provided a regular four-day school-week, keeping Wednesdays free in order to allow pupils to receive religious instruction. In consequence, the weekly work load for pupils had to be organized over only four school days. Europe-wide comparisons have led to modifications to this demanding system. As of the academic year 2014/15, legislation introduced a four-and-a-half-day schoolweek (including Wednesday mornings) for pupils in the *école*

5 <https://data.oecd.org/gdp/gross-domestic-product-gdp.htm>

6 <https://data.oecd.org/gga/general-government-deficit.htm>

7 <https://data.oecd.org/unemp/unemployment-rate.htm>

8 <https://data.oecd.org/unemp/youth-unemployment-rate.htm#indicator-chart>

*maternelle* and the *école élémentaire*. Parallel to the regular system, public schools are complemented by a wide range of private schools, particularly of catholic denomination.

The public mandate for schools is dedicated to passing on and consolidating republican values to the next generation – it is supposed to educate men and women to become citizens of the French Republic. This implies a meritocratic idea, according to which a republican elite is raised solely on the basis of individual formal educational achievement. In this sense, school is meant to guarantee an equal distribution of social position and status in society – and ensures, thus, the key significance of initial education in comparison to e. g. adult and continuing learning. Critical voices persistently raise the issue that the fact of where the school leaving examination (*baccalauréat*) is achieved and, even more, which higher education institution is attended, remains highly influential regarding career opportunities and, ultimately, societal status. The idea of a republican elite has been subjected to scrutiny because of the substantial gap between the standard education system for the masses and an exclusive elite system e. g. in higher education (*Grandes écoles*).

Historically, today's education system is strongly linked with the person of Jules Ferry (1832–1893), who was the Minister of Public Instruction in the 1880s and one of the fathers of the modern school (*école républicaine*). The then Ministry (*Ministère de l'Instruction publique*) had been established in 1828. However, Jules Ferry moved matters forward by introducing compulsory school attendance (from age 6 to 11, both boys and girls) as a free of charge and secular concept in form of a public institution (*Lois Ferry* 1881, 1882).

The current Ministry of National Education, Higher Education and Research (*Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Recherche*) still holds a strong position in the political system, and is in charge of employing all teachers in public primary and secondary schools, professors and researchers in higher education. Due to the centralistic administrative structure of the French state and in spite of noticeable decentralization trends since the beginning of the 1980s, all curriculum directives and standards for the education system are set by this Ministry and are published regularly in an official bulletin (*Bulletin officiel de l'Éducation nationale/de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Recherche*). The curriculum is the same for all students at primary and secondary level (including the option to choose specialized sections). The high degree of centralization is seen as a way of ensuring equality (*égalité*) in education in terms of geographical, social and economic factors influencing school and professional careers.

As shown in figure 2, the education system is divided into three general levels:

1. primary education (*enseignement primaire*);
2. secondary education (*enseignement secondaire*);
3. higher education (*enseignement supérieur*).



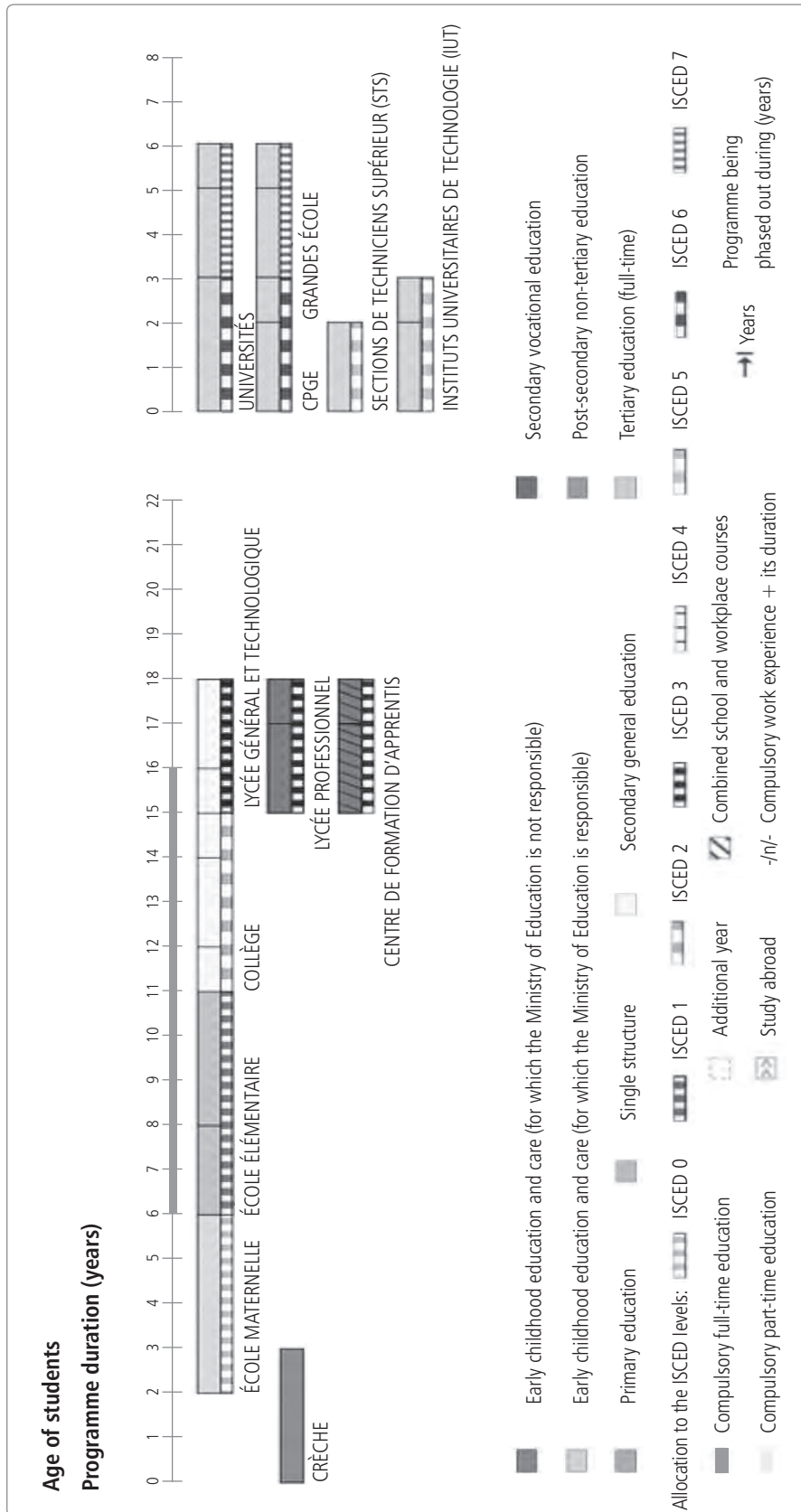


Figure 2: Structure of the French Education System (Source: Eurydice; <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/France:Overview>)



Schooling is mandatory as of age six until 16; nevertheless, a very high percentage of children attend a day nursery (*crèche*) or a family daycare (*assistant/e maternel(le)*), then followed around age three by a kindergarten (*école maternelle*).

The early childhood education and care provided in the *école maternelle* is the responsibility of the Ministry of National Education; this integration of early childhood education into the regular school system is almost unique in Europe and France is one of very few countries in Europe and the OECD range where educators in the *école maternelle* hold a master's degree (cf. OECD, 2014, pp. 496–497) and are therefore also allowed to work as primary school teachers. Though it is optional, close to 100 percent of all children aged three to five attend the *école maternelle* (cf. DEP, 2015). Current legislation has strengthened public responsibility to provide, on parental request, a place in an *école maternelle* or a similar institution as close as possible to home (*Loi d'orientation et de programme pour l'avenir de l'école d'avril 2005*). The full range of child care services provided in France shows substantial effects as part of public measures to encourage mothers to seek employment. In recent years, employment rates amongst women (aged 15 to 64) have risen in France as well as in Germany and represent a comparable percentage<sup>9</sup> in both countries, but employment patterns are different: Mothers in Germany work first and foremost in part-time jobs or in marginal employment, whereas a high percentage of mothers in France are in full-time employment (cf. Luci, 2011).

Following primary education, the structure of French secondary education is divided into the collège (four years; *brevet des collèges* as final exam) and then a three-year course in the *lycée*, preparing pupils for the traditional school leaving examination (*baccalauréat*). Pupils can choose from a variety of *lycées*, according to which the type of school leaving examination varies: Generally oriented *lycées* (*lycée général et technologique*) award the traditional *baccalauréat*, whereas the *lycée professionnel* and the *Centres de formation d'apprentis* (CFA) offer vocationally oriented qualifications (e. g. *brevet d'études professionnelles* (BEP), *baccalauréat professionnel*). Not all types of school leaving examinations allow for entry to higher education. As part of the meritocratic idea and the elite system in higher education with its so-called *Grandes écoles* (see above), society values the *baccalauréat général* as the most prestigious one. The examination is sat under strict rules; all students must be provided with the same exams (within their chosen focus – *série*).

In correspondence with the European area, subsequent higher education is organized in the three-tier degree system of bachelor – master – doctorate. Whereas public universities are obliged to accept all *baccalauréat* holders in their region, the *Grandes écoles* are allowed to select students according to national rankings and tests. In order to pass these tests, pupils generally attend two-year preparatory classes (*classes préparatoires aux grandes écoles* – CPGE). Educating a narrow elite student body, the *Grandes écoles* guarantee their graduates a prestigious professional career.

9 <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do?dvsc=4>

However, as in all OECD countries, completing tertiary education correlates to a large extent with well-paid and stable employment conditions, leaving the least skilled the most vulnerable group on the labor market, as figure 3 reveals for Metropolitan France (cf. OECD, 2014, pp. 122–123, 141; Formation Emploi 118, 2012b).

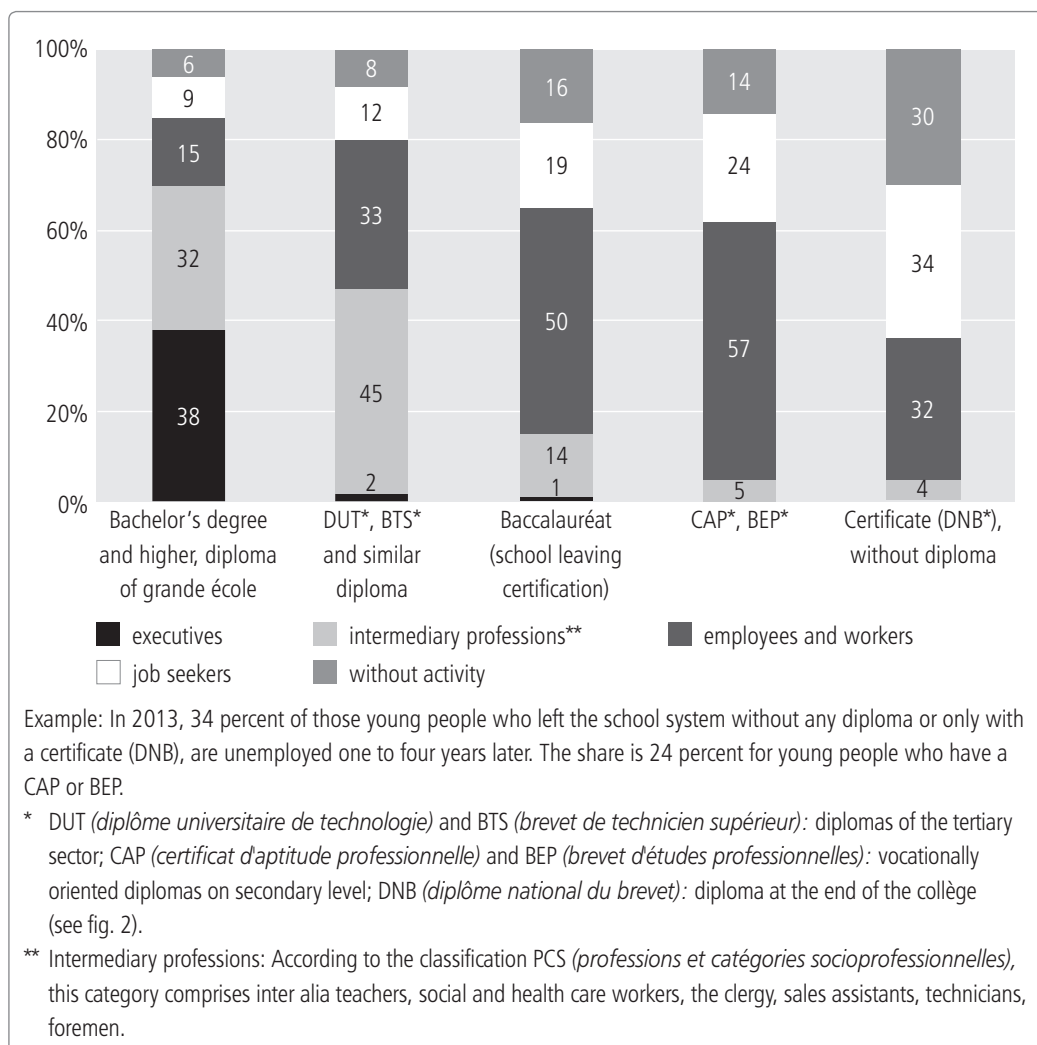


Figure 3: Career status of young people one to four years after completion of school in France (2013) (in %). Range: Metropolitan France (Source: Author's own graph based on MENESR, 2014)

Education for students with learning difficulties/special needs has traditionally been organized within the scope of education for special needs (*enseignement spécialisé*). This comprises special classes for inclusive schooling (*classe pour l'inclusion scolaire* – CLIS) as part of regular schools or, in the form of separate institutions (e. g. *Institut thérapeutique, éducatif et pédagogique* – ITEP; *Institut médico-éducatifs* – IME). Since the education code (*Code de l'éducation*) was amended in 2013, the principle of inclusion has been implemented in the French school system in order to guarantee “*l'égalité des chances*”, meaning equality in opportunities for all (*inclusion scolaire*, *Code de l'éducation* – Article L111-1; loi n°2013-595 du 8 juillet 2013 – art. 2).

In this education code (2013), the first sentence of the above cited article proclaimed education as the nation's first priority: “*L'éducation est la première priorité nationale*” (*Code de l'éducation – Article L111-1; loi n°2013-595 du 8 juillet 2013 – art. 2*). Today's policy measures are devoted to diverse challenges:

Combating France's high youth unemployment rate, policy measures launched by the Ministry of National Education, Higher Education and Research in November 2014 (*Mission de lutte contre le décrochage scolaire – MLDS*) are targeted at preventing drop-outs by implementing support measures within schools as well as externally with school leavers in order to re-integrate them into the qualification system via newly established regional networks (*Réseaux Formation Qualification Emploi – FoQualE*). The aim is to half the number of school drop-outs by 2017.

The traditional public mandate for schools (see above), meaning the mission of education to instil republican values, has been revived following the shooting on January 7<sup>th</sup> 2015 in the offices of the French satirical weekly newspaper *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris in which eleven people were killed. Only days later, the Ministry introduced eleven action items: “the great commitment of schools to republican values” (*La grande mobilisation de l'École pour les valeurs de la République, jeudi 22 janvier 2015*). Thus, the mission of education has been confirmed on the agenda:<sup>10</sup>

- setting the principle of laïcité and the imparting of republican values in the foreground of school's commitment;
- fostering citizenship and a culture of involvement together with all partners of school education;
- combating inequalities and favoring social diversity in order to strengthen the sense of belonging to the French Republic;
- mobilizing higher education and research in support of these measures.

Finally, a glance at public spending on education. Current surveys identify France as one of the few OECD countries that have not decreased public expenditure on educational institutions in recent years, e. g. because of global financial and economic crisis (cf. OECD, 2014, p. 226, 234). Corresponding to the OECD average, France invests 6.1 percent of its GDP in educational institutions (cf. OECD, 2014, p. 230). In contrast to OECD average values, France's annual expenditure per pupil by educational institution shows a 20 percent higher figure per pupil in secondary education, whereas the outlay per pupil on primary education is 20 percent below the average. All in all, the level of educational attainment and the overall skills level of the French population have risen substantially in the past decades (cf. OECD, 2014, pp. 48–52). France – in contrast to Germany – is an example for successful intergenerational mobility in education:

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10 [www.education.gouv.fr/cid85644/onze-mesures-pour-un-grande-mobilisation-de-l-ecole-pour-les-valeurs-de-la-republique.html](http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid85644/onze-mesures-pour-un-grande-mobilisation-de-l-ecole-pour-les-valeurs-de-la-republique.html)

More than 40 percent of 25 to 64 year olds have attained a higher level of educational attainment than their parents (upward mobility) (cf. *ib.*, pp. 87–88).

These key features of the national education system set the backdrop for focusing on the area of adult and continuing education.

## 2. Historical Development

The legacy of historical development paths have brought a wide range of terms into today's discourse on adult and continuing education in France. These are closely linked to more or less diverse ideas, with particular stakeholders, financial responsibilities or respective tasks: adult education (*éducation/formation des adultes*), permanent education (*éducation permanente*), further and continuing education (*formation professionnelle continue*), lifelong learning (*formation tout au long de la vie*) and many more. A classification by Dubar (2008) helps to systematize this variety to some extent and to provide an overview of key historical trajectories of French adult and continuing education within the vast landscapes of France's rich history.

### Historical Trajectories

#### Adult and Continuing Education as Ensuring Upward Social Mobility of the Citizen

The core idea of this adult and continuing education trajectory is to ensure the adult learner upward social mobility via the means of transmitting a comprehensive body of knowledge in order to allow him or her to achieve formal educational qualifications and, thus, to climb up the professional and social ladder (cf. Dubar, 2008, p. 168). Teaching is provided in formal settings, off the job, e. g. in evening classes, and is intended to pass on republican values to the country's citizens – men and women. This should ultimately serve the aim of maintaining or consolidating the nation's unity. Yet, attending this kind of adult education was ultimately seen as an individual (not public) responsibility, rewarded by individual upward social mobility, as still proclaimed by *loi Debré* of 1959.

One of the fathers of this adult education leitmotif is Marie Jean Antoine Nicolas Caritat, Marquis de Condorcet (1743–1794), a French philosopher, politician and mathematician. During the revolution, he – as a republican – proposed to the Constitutional Affairs Committee of April 1792 his idea of public education in the sense of permanent education (*éducation permanente*). Condorcet argued that permanent education had to be seen as a duty of each citizen towards society, but also acknowledged as the right to universal, equal and permanent education for all (“droit à une éducation universelle, égale et permanente pour tous”; cf. Franchi, 1999, p. 14; Santelmann, 2006, p. 30). Likewise, he emphasized the principle of *laïcité*, separating public instruction from teaching on religious matters (see chapter 1).

During the same period and buoyed by the ideas of the Enlightenment, collective learning settings for the evolving bourgeoisie flourished in urban areas, e. g. political and literary salons. These salons also stood for the objective of transmitting a rationally derived body of knowledge to adult learners and developing their bourgeois identity as citizens. Madame Geoffrin (1699–1777), one of the famous *salonnières* of the 18th century, ran such a salon in Paris, hosting guests like Montesquieu (1689–1755) or Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778).

It would take another 100 years until Jules Ferry implemented Condorcet's ideas by introducing compulsory school attendance as a free of charge and secular concept in form of a public institution (*Lois Ferry* 1881, 1882) (see chapter 1). These features remain one of the core principles of the French education system today.

### **Adult and Continuing Education as Further and Continuing Education**

The era of the industrial revolution and the considerable transformations it brought about initiated the second key trajectory in French adult and continuing education from the beginning of the 19th century onwards: the roots of vocational further and continuing education (cf. Dubar, 2008, p. 168). In contrast to the representatives of the first trajectory, most of the employers during this period judged the aim of transmitting a comprehensive body of knowledge to every citizen as redundant and even dangerous to the public order (cf. Santelmann, 2006, p. 30). Yet the majority of the workforce urgently needed basic skills in arithmetic, writing and reading in order to keep up with the ongoing transformation of working methods and workplace knowledge. Therefore, this trajectory led to the provision of the basic education needed by the workforce in vocational oriented evening schools/classes. The first so-called polytechnics (*École polytechnique française/École centrale des travaux publics*) were founded in 1794 and gathered momentum in the middle of the 19th century (cf. Franchi, 1999, pp. 15–16), but for a long time remained concentrated in urban areas.

Thus, the leitmotif of this trajectory is linked to the objective of modernization of the national economy and consolidating the employability of its human capital, the workforce. It was renewed in the aftermaths of the two World Wars and the reconstruction of postwar France up to the Delors Law in 1971 (*Loi Delors juillet 1971*) that put “vocational further and continuing education within the scope of permanent education” (*formation professionnelle continue dans le cadre de l'éducation permanente*) on the agenda (cf. Dubar, 2008, p. 169). The core principle is the adaption of the workforce – note: not all citizens – to the dynamic progress of the world of work, technology and requirements of particular sectors and enterprises. It is implemented in rather short-term, recurrent learning settings (*éducation récurrente*), often during working hours and subsidized by the employer.

The linkage with the world of work introduced the issue of adult education as part of labor law and defined the financial responsibility of the employer. In contrast, providing adult education to the unemployed remains a public responsibility.

Within the scope of the Delors Law (1971), the establishment of the further and continuing education sector moved to the fore at the beginning of the 1970s, not least due to the launch of the equal fund system for financing vocational further and continuing education (see chapter 3). From then on, most vocational further and continuing education was organized within companies, which had a dominance of company-internal job mobility as a side effect. Beyond the enterprise, employees were much less mobile regarding job transitions, a phenomenon which became par-

ticularly evident at the beginning of the 1980s against the backdrop of high youth unemployment rates and mass dismissals. Many could not provide formal evidence of their skills and competences. This led to legislation in the following years which set out to validate and recognize non-formally and informally acquired competencies as well, laying the foundation for today's validation system (VAE) (see chapter 6).

### Adult and Continuing Education as Lifelong Learning

The third historical trajectory to be differentiated is adult and continuing education following a holistic understanding of lifelong learning. Terminologies linked with this understanding are (also) permanent education (*éducation permanente*), popular adult education as *éducation populaire* movement, self-education (*auto-formation*), mental training (*entraînement mental*) or, translated from the well-known international policy discourse, *formation tout au long de la vie* as lifelong learning (cf. Savoirs, 2004-6).

Core features of this adult and continuing education trajectory are the significance of individual learning interests, often shared and pursued in collective learning settings as experienced in associations or federations, but also in self-education processes (*auto-formation*) (cf. Eneau, forthcoming). A wide range of topics and content is represented and there is no obligation to serve either republican duties or the constraints of knowledge society.

From the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, rural areas benefited from the *éducation populaire* movement, e. g. with the *Ligue française de l'enseignement* (founded in 1866, today known as *Ligue de l'Enseignement*), or the *Amicale Laïque* movement organizing adult education, public libraries, excursions, sports clubs and similar ventures and which is still active today (cf. Franchi, 1999, p. 16) (see chapter 5). With the help of such movements, a *terreau éducatif local* (= a local educative soil, Ferrand, 2012) has flourished in many regions.

*Entraînement mental* is a pedagogical method introduced by Joffre Dumazedier (1915–2002), a French sociologist, in 1944 and first used with young unemployed persons, then also within the scope of the *Résistance*, the resistance movement during the Second World War. Later on, it was commonly used by *Peuple et Culture* (people and culture), a network of adult education associations that was founded in the aftermath of the Second World War – not least by Joffre Dumazedier, one of the most lively and influential stakeholders in adult and continuing education at that time. The *entraînement mental* method aims to develop critical reasoning by transforming abstract universal concepts to everyday life and, in particular, to one's own daily routines and working contexts. 70 years later, *Peuple et Culture* still stands for combating inequality in access to culture (*inégalités culturelles*) and for people's right to access the world of knowledge and learning across the lifespan (*le droit de savoir tout au long de la vie*).



## Towards the Current Adult Education System

### ***Formation tout au long de la vie and formation professionnelle continue***

The historical trajectories outlined above each left their traces on today's adult and continuing education system in France. The legacies of the French Revolution consolidated state and public responsibilities in ensuring equality (*égalité*) in society, fostering social mobility via adult and continuing education and upholding the principle of *laïcité* (secularism). At the same time, the Delors Law of 1971 (*Loi Delors juillet 1971*) strongly grounded the vocationally-oriented further and continuing education strand that confirmed the role of enterprises as influential stakeholders and common places of adult learning. It is not by chance that the term *formation* is used in translating lifelong learning in the context of the international lifelong learning policy agenda (see below; cf. Savoires, 2004-6). Lifelong learning in a holistic understanding looks back on rich traditions in collective learning settings and pedagogical methods and is still present in the form of adult education providers like *Peuple et Culture*; yet, its public standing is not comparable nor its distribution as widespread as e. g. in Scandinavian countries.

Today's adult and continuing education arena in France is shaped by two generic terms: lifelong learning (*la formation tout au long de la vie*) and further and continuing education (*formation professionnelle continue*). This differentiation is not always a clear-cut one, but it represents a key principle that governs policy, practice and research and refers to the respective French understandings of what adult and continuing education should be:

- Lifelong learning (*la formation tout au long de la vie*):

Within the scope of the strengthened European lifelong learning agenda from the mid-1990s onwards, this term also made its way into the French discourse, translated to *la formation tout au long de la vie*. The law of May 2004 initiated a modernization of the further and continuing education system and emphasized the significance of “lifelong further and continuing education” (*formation professionnelle tout au long de la vie*) as a national obligation. However, this translation of lifelong learning continues to attract some critical voices due to the use of the term *formation* (representing a vocational-oriented concept) and not *éducation*, thus emphasizing even more strongly the predominance of the further and continuing education market within the whole French lifelong learning arena. In policy terms, the area of lifelong learning is under the responsibility of the Ministry of National Education. There, it is defined as:

a continuum between initial education, general education or vocational training and refers to all situations where competences are acquired: activities in further and continuing education, in the working context, in associations or voluntary work. It comprises measures of advice and guidance, documentation, counselling on behalf of employment/career (re-)entry, training and the validation of acquired experience.<sup>11</sup>

11 [www.education.gouv.fr/cid217/la-formation-tout-au-long-de-la-vie.html](http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid217/la-formation-tout-au-long-de-la-vie.html). Author's translation.



- Further and continuing education (*formation professionnelle continue*):  
In contrast, further and continuing education (*formation professionnelle continue*) is governed by the Ministry of Labor. It is relevant to every person over 16 years of age and having left the initial formal school system.  
According to the modified labor code of 2004 (*Loi n° 2004-391 du 4 mai 2004*), the Ministry specifies it as “lifelong further and continuing education” (*formation professionnelle tout au long de la vie*):

Lifelong further and continuing education constitutes a national obligation. (...) [It] aims at fostering vocational re-/integration into the labour market, retention in employment, competence development and access to different qualification levels, contributing to economic and cultural development and to upward social mobility. Furthermore, it is meant to support those returning to work after parental leave or a break to care for family members.<sup>12</sup>

In today's adult and continuing education system, several aspects are often highlighted as remarkable, system-specific features: These include, in particular, the country-wide uniform legal framework for the sector of adult and continuing education (see chapter 3), a result of the centralistic state structure (cf. Eneau, 2011). There is an equal fund system for financing vocational further and continuing education and, for companies, a national obligation to pay an education tax (cf. Drexel, 2004) (see chapter 4). This gave rise to an enormously powerful system of further and continuing education. At the same time, it has kept non-formal and informal adult learning settings rather at the periphery of public support and could not yet provide solutions for overcoming traditional patterns of participation in adult and continuing education (see chapter 7; cf. Drexel, 2004; Möbus, 2006). Another remarkable aspect in Europe-wide comparison is the comprehensive accreditation system of recognition (*bilan de compétences*) and validation (VAE system) of prior learning (see chapter 3, 6). Along with the legal framework concerning the diverse forms of educational leave, the individual adult learner has legitimate and standardized access to a variety of support measures for his or her personal lifelong learning pathway.

Current discourses of the French adult and continuing education sector deal with aspects often similar to issues of e. g. the German context.

This refers for example to the debate on concepts of “competence” (*compétence*). The French discourse is also characterized by the absence of a commonly recognized definition of competence (cf. Gilbert, 2006, p. 74; Aubret, Gilbert & Pigeyre, 2005, p. 33; Clement, Le Mouillour & Walter, 2006). However, it is agreed on that, unlike “qualification” (*qualification*), “competence” represents a more holistic, subject-oriented approach and the entity of practical skills, qualifications and social and personal competences: “savoir (compétences théoriques), savoir-faire (compétences pratiques), et savoir-être (compétences sociales et comportementales)” (Aubret,

12 [www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000000613810&categorieLien=id](http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000000613810&categorieLien=id).  
Author's translation.

Gilbert, & Pigeyre, 2005, p. 54). This has opened up the discourse not only on recognition, but also on validation of competences, irrespective of the context in which experience and competences have been acquired. Thus, today's policy framework provides both instruments for recognition (*bilan de compétences*) and for validation (the VAE system, see chapter 6).

This reconfiguration towards more subject-oriented approaches, putting the learner and his or her demands, needs and interests at the center of attention, has supported the professionalization of the traditional adult educator's role from an *enseignant/enseignante* towards the model of a *formateur/formatrice* and towards the *métiers de la formation*: valuing “diversité ‘démocratique’” (democracy's diversity) rather than “uniformité ‘républicaine’” (republican's uniformity) (Dubar, 2008, p. 178). Within the scope of this, the current academic discourse on the professionalization of adult and continuing education links inter alia the historical French concept of *auto-formation* (see above), following a holistic understanding of lifelong learning, to the German humanistic approach of *Bildung* and the more Anglo-American tradition of Transformative Learning (cf. Eneau, forthcoming) in order to discuss today's potential of emancipatory traditions of adult education.

Finally, the issue of inequalities in access to and participation in adult and continuing education along criteria of age, gender, educational background and the like remains under scrutiny (see the following chapters). It reveals, similar to Germany, the impact of the so-called Matthew-effect: To he who has, will be given more (meaning, the higher the educational background, the higher the participation in the scope of lifelong learning opportunities). This effect calls France's national maxim of *égalité* (see chapter 1) into question: As far as individuals' lifelong learning is concerned, equality in opportunities – via e. g. the meritocratic idea – does not guarantee equality of outcomes (cf. Dubar, 2008, p. 172; Möbus, 2006).

Such key issues will be further detailed under the differentiated topics in the following chapters in order to provide systematized access to relevant features of French adult and continuing education.

### 3. Political and Legal Framework

The current policy and legislative framework for France's adult education sector covers a wide range of lifelong learning areas, providing a comprehensive regulatory framework in particular for the further and continuing education sector. The key to understanding this prioritization is the Delors Law from 1971 that acknowledges further and continuing education as a national obligation. The passing of the law opened up a huge open market for adult further and continuing education providers, subsidized by the equal fund system which was introduced at the same time.

Today, national monitoring of adult and continuing education represents a vital part of the policy and legislative level. Relevant data and information is provided primarily by public and semi-public organizations:

- The National Institute for Statistics and for Economic Studies (*Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques – INSEE*), founded in 1946.
- The Centre for Studies and Research on Qualifications (*Centre d'études et de recherches sur les qualifications – CEREQ*): Established in 1970, the CEREQ focuses its research on issues of the labor market, social inclusion/exclusion in the education context, transitions between the fields of lifelong learning, qualifications and adult and continuing education. It is under the joint direction of the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Labor.
- The Directorate for Research, Studies and Statistics (*Direction de l'animation de la recherche, des études et des statistiques – DARES*): Though affiliated to the Ministry of Labor and, thus contributing mainly to research on the labor market, the DARES is under the supervision of the INSEE and therefore occupies an independent position. It was launched in 1993.
- The Centre Inffo, a semi-public stakeholder founded in 1901 and overseen since 1976 by the Ministry of Labor, provides and disseminates information on current issues, research outcomes and discourses for the variety of stakeholders involved in adult and continuing education (see chapter 10).

Of vital importance for the monitoring process is the legal requirement for actors of further and continuing education to provide the public administration with details of their activities. This duty was introduced into the labor code in 2003 and it provides annual data on organizations' learning and funding activities (*Bilan pédagogique et financier – BPF*). The BPF database defines education in the sense of *formation* as activities of vocational further and continuing education, skills assessment (*bilan de compétences*) and VAE; in this way, it explicitly includes guidance and counselling. However, it is important to note that such data refer almost exclusively to further and continuing education activities; the traditional and more general adult learning sector is monitored by INSEE studies, yet not to an extent comparable to that of the BPF.

## Political Framework

The political framework is laid out predominantly by two ministries: the Ministry of National Education, Higher Education and Research (*Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Recherche*) and the Ministry of Labor, Employment, Vocational Training and Social Dialogue (*Ministère du Travail, de l'Emploi, de la Formation professionnelle et du Dialogue social*):

- The Ministry of National Education, Higher Education and Research (in short: Ministry of National Education) is responsible for organizing and financing initial (vocational) education; ensuring the wide range of adult and continuing education by its networks of local institutions (GRETAs; see chapter 5); and for contributing to the development of the lifelong learning agenda and its concepts on ministerial level.<sup>13</sup>
- The Ministry of Labor, Employment, Vocational Training and Social Dialogue (in short: Ministry of Labor) targets the issue of further and continuing education through the lens of individual employability and labor market requirements and puts special emphasis on regular negotiations with social partners and stakeholders. Whereas the Ministry of National Education is responsible for subsidizing basic adult education infrastructures, the Ministry of Labor contributes financially to initial vocational education and to adult and continuing education measures for target-groups that are defined by the current policy agenda (migrants, senior citizens, people with special needs, prison inmates etc.).<sup>14</sup>

This ministerial level is linked to the tasks of the national State Employment Agency (*Pôle emploi*). The latter was created in 2008 (*Loi no 2008-126 du 13 février 2008 relative à la réforme de l'organisation du service public de l'emploi*) and functions as an autonomous body, carrying out tasks in the public interest. In April 2010, staff from the Association for Vocational Training and Education of Adults (*Association pour la formation professionnelle des adultes – AFPA*), founded in 1949 (see below), were transferred to the Employment Agency and work first and foremost in guidance and counselling matters (see chapter 4, 5).

In addition to the above, regions (*collectivités territoriales*) have to be seen as key players within the political framework of adult and continuing education. Historically, they provided important local sites of flourishing adult education movements and activities (see chapter 2). Due to decentralization processes since the beginning of the 1980s (see chapter 1), “the region” has emerged as an administrative policy unit in an otherwise very centralistically organized state, and thus, represents a rather recent construct in France (cf. Ferrand, 2009). By means of new legislation issued in 2009 (*Loi relative à l'orientation et à la formation professionnelle tout au long de la vie*, 25 novembre 2009), the regional governance level has gained power, represented by the Regional Council as deliberative body (cf. Ferrand, 2012). The

13 [www.education.gouv.fr/cid217/la-formation-tout-au-long-de-la-vie.html](http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid217/la-formation-tout-au-long-de-la-vie.html)

14 [www.education.gouv.fr/cid217/la-formation-tout-au-long-de-la-vie.html](http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid217/la-formation-tout-au-long-de-la-vie.html)

Regional Council obtained the right to decide on prioritizing adult and continuing education policies in consultation with the regional stakeholders and according to regionally specific social and economic constraints. The outcome is documented in an agreement between the state and the respective Regional Council (*Contrat de Plan Régional de Développement des Formations – CPRDF*). In this way, the Regional Council plays the part of an intermediary broker between the administrative levels (state – regions) and the various social, economic and education policy agendas.

In order to foster social dialogue and cooperation between the key players – state, regions (Regional Councils) and social and economic partners – the National Council for Lifelong Further and Continuing Education (*Conseil national de la formation professionnelle tout au long de la vie – CNFPTLV*) was set up by new legislation in 2004 (see below, the modified labor code; and strengthened in 2009 – *loi n° 2009-1437 du 24 novembre 2009*). Recent modifications within the scope of new legislation on vocational education and training, employment and social democracy (March 2014) unified this National Council with its counterpart in the employment sector (*Conseil national de l'emploi*) to create the new National Council for Employment, Vocational Training, Education and Guidance (*Conseil national de l'emploi, de la formation et de l'orientation professionnelles – CNEFOP*).

Social and economic partners include trade unions, professional associations, adult education providers and, due to their position as the main funders of further and continuing education (see chapter 4), companies. In general, the following measures have been put in place (see table 1):

**France adult and continuing education policy framework: Overview (2015)**

- **Individual Training Leave (*congé individuel de formation – CIF*):** "Le congé individuel de formation (...) created by law no. 84-130 of 24 February 1984 allows all private-sector employees, throughout their professional lives, on their initiative, and individually, to be trained independently from courses set out in the company training programme. It may be used to access a higher level of qualification, change activity or sector (mobility or reconversion), open up more broadly to culture, social life or volunteer action in an association. The CIF is scheduled to last a maximum one-year period for full-time training or 1,200 hours for part-time training. It is necessary to prove length of service – two years' salaried activity, including one year in the current company. Leave of absence given by the employer does not automatically incur a maintained level of remuneration or payment of related training costs. The maintained level of remuneration is only acquired by the employee when he or she has received approval from the 'joint body' (institution composed of an equal number of employers' and employees' representatives) to which the employer belongs."\*
- **Vocational Training Leave (*congé de formation professionnelle*):** "Le congé de formation professionnelle (...) established after law no 86-33 of 9 January 1986 is aimed at civil servants who have completed at least three years' service in the civil service. Its aim is to allow civil servants to complete personal training through vocational or personal training courses not proposed to them by the civil service or for actions organised or approved by the civil service with a view to preparing for civil service exams. The training period cannot exceed three years for the whole career and the civil servant is paid 85 percent of his or her gross salary."\*
- **Accreditation of Prior Learning (*validation des acquis de l'expérience – VAE*):** "The validation des acquis de l'expérience (...) created by social modernisation law no. 2002-73 of 17 January 2002 is a measure that allows anyone, regardless of their age, level of qualification or status, to validate acquired experience to obtain a professional certificate. Three years' experience related to the content of the targeted certification is required. The VAE is a means of obtaining, totally or partially, a diploma, title or vocational qualification certificate listed on the Répertoire national des certifications professionnelles (RNCP – National repository of professional certifications). In most cases, the candidate should complete an application form itemising his or her professional experience and acquired skills. He or she appears before a jury which decides to validate all or part of the targeted diploma. If acquired experience is partially validated, recommendations are made to the candidate to obtain the diploma in full. The VAE system has been opened to civil servants – for internal promotions as well as civil service exams – following laws no. 2007-148 of 2 February 2007 bearing on modernisation of the civil service, and no. 2007-209 of 19 February 2007 bearing on local civil service."\*
- **National Qualifications Framework (*répertoire national des certifications professionnelles – RNCP*):** "The Répertoire national des certifications professionnelles (...) created by the social modernisation law no. 2002-73 of 17 January 2002 aims to provide individuals and companies with constantly updated information on professional diplomas and titles."\*

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Right to Skills Assessment (<i>droit au bilan de compétences</i>):</b> “The droit au bilan de compétences – right to skills assessment, established after the law of May 2004 on lifelong vocational training, allows employees to take stock of their skills, aptitudes and motivations and define a professional or training plan. Conducted by an outside intervener [an inspector], according to very precise stages, the skills assessment may be decided by the employer or implemented on the initiative of the employee, within the framework of specific leave. The employee, justifying at least five months of salaried work, including 12 months in the current company, may apply for leave of absence for a maximum of 24 hours from his/her employer to conduct skills assessment.”*</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Individual Learning Account (<i>compte personnel de formation – CPF</i>):</b> This measure substitutes the traditional Individual Right to Vocational Training and Education (<i>droit individuel à la formation – DIF</i>) from January 2015 onwards. The former Individual Right to Training created by the law of May 2004 on lifelong vocational training aimed to allow all employees with at least one year’s length of service in the company to benefit from 20 hours of personal training per year, which may be added up over six years within the limit of 120 hours. The new Individual Learning Account is meant to follow each person in his or her professional career throughout the lifespan, even through periods of unemployment. The account is now accredited with a maximum of 150 hours over nine years.</li> </ul>
<p>* <a href="https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/France:Lifelong_Learning_Strategy">https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/France:Lifelong_Learning_Strategy</a></p>

Table 1: France adult and continuing education policy framework: Overview (2015)

(Source: Author’s illustration)

## Legal Framework

The relevant legal framework follows the two main ministerial responsibilities stated above, shared by the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Labor. In consequence, the education code (*code de l’éducation*) and the labor code (*code du travail*) serve as the main legislative and regulatory frameworks.

In the following, the core legislation is presented in chronological order (see table 2), starting after the Second World War.



France adult and continuing education: Overview core legislation from the 1940s until the 2010s
<b>1940s</b> <b>1946: The preamble of the Constitution of the Fourth French Republic</b> acknowledges for the first time the individual right to vocational training and education. <b>1949: The Association for Vocational Training and Education of Adults</b> ( <i>Association pour la formation professionnelle des adultes – AFPA</i> ) is founded in the light of reconstructing postwar France.
<b>1950s</b> <b>1959: Debré Law</b> ( <i>loi Debré, Loi no 59-960 du 31 juillet 1959 relative à diverses dispositions tendant à la promotion sociale</i> ) allows adult education centers to establish evening classes in order to support adults to attend further and continuing education and gain upward social mobility. This is not yet defined as a comprehensive governmental/public task.
<b>1960s</b> <b>1968: The Grenelle Agreements</b> ( <i>Accords de Grenelle</i> ) serve as a crucial milestone on the way to placing further and continuing education on the public agenda as a comprehensive task of all public, social and economic stakeholders. The agreements are concluded after negotiations between the government, the trade unions and employer organizations in the revolutionary mood of spring 1968. Items on the agenda include a substantial increase in minimum and average real wages, the establishment of the trade union section of business ( <i>Section syndicale d'entreprise</i> ) and the future direction of organizing further and continuing education. This leads to the first Agreement (1970) between the different stakeholders on the topic of vocational education and training, introducing it into the labor code ( <i>l'accord national interprofessionnel (ANI) du 9 juillet 1970</i> ).
<b>1970s</b> <b>1971: Delors Law in 1971</b> ( <i>Loi Delors n°71-575 juillet 1971</i> ) places "vocational further and continuing education within the scope of permanent education" ( <i>formation professionnelle continue dans le cadre de l'éducation permanente</i> ) and, in general, the establishment of the further and continuing education sector in the foreground – effectively rendering vocational further and continuing education a national obligation for employers and employees. A milestone of the French further and continuing education sector is implemented, providing by law a mandatory contribution to the further and continuing education sector (then 0.8 % of gross annual wages) by companies with more than ten employees. This lays the foundations for today's equal fund system, launching a huge privately organized market in further and continuing education (see chapter 4).
<b>1980s</b> <b>1984: Law on further and continuing education reform</b> ( <i>Loi no 84-130 du 24 février 1984 dite loi Rigoux portant réforme de la formation professionnelle continue et modification corrélative du code du travail</i> ) strengthens the Individual Right to Training Leave (CIF) and defines an individual entitlement to two mandatory work appraisals per year for negotiating further and continuing education measures. <b>1985: Decree on the so-called "VAP 1985"</b> ( <i>décret n° 85-906 du 23 août 1985; validation des études, expériences professionnelles ou acquis personnels en vue de l'accès aux différents niveaux de l'enseignement supérieur</i> ): The measure of "validation of studies, vocational experiences or individual acquisition concerning access to different levels of higher education" grants alternative access routes to different levels of higher education institutions via the validation objects described above.



**1990s**

**1990: Law on monitoring and quality assurance in further and continuing education** (*Loi n° 90-579 du 4 juillet 1990 relative au crédit-formation, à la qualité et au contrôle de la formation professionnelle continue et modifiant le livre IX du code du travail*): In order to regulate the diverse private further and continuing education market, an association responsible for proving and awarding a quality label is introduced (*l'Office professionnel de qualification des organismes de formation continue – OPQFC*).

**1993: Law on reform of financing of further and continuing education** (*Loi n° 93-1313 quinquennale du 20 décembre 1993 quinquennale relative au travail, à l'emploi et à la formation professionnelle*): The former fund system for financing further and continuing education (*fonds d'assurance formation*) is transferred to today's system of the Joint Organization of Accredited Collectors (*organismes paritaires collecteurs agréés – OPCA/organismes paritaires collecteurs agréés au titre du CIF – OPACIF*) in responsibility of the equal fund system. Furthermore, the law provides the basis for Individual Learning Accounts (*capital temps formation*) that allow employees to attend further and continuing education during work-time.

**2000s**

**2002: Social modernization law no. 2002-73 of 17 January 2002** (*Loi du 17 janvier 2002 de modernisation sociale*): Together with the following reform in 2004, this law intends to modernize the further and continuing education sector. Besides labor, health and housing issues it covers certain aspects of vocational training and education: It establishes (a) the accreditation system of prior learning (*validation des acquis de l'expérience – VAE*); (b) a Committee on Coordination of Regional Employment and Vocational Training (*Comité de coordination régionale de l'emploi et de la formation professionnelle*), a regional co-ordination body under the responsibility of the regional councils; and (c) a National Commission on Vocational Certifications (*Commission nationale de la certification professionnelle – CNCP*) as an interministerial, interprofessional and interinstitutional coordinating body. Furthermore, the funding of the Centers for Vocational Education and Training (*Centres de formation d'apprentis – CFA*) were coordinated under the umbrella of the regional councils.

**2004: Law no. 2004-391 of May 2004 on lifelong vocational training and social dialogue** (*Loi n° 2004-391 du 4 mai 2004 relative à la formation professionnelle tout au long de la vie et au dialogue social*): In correspondence with the law of 2002, a comprehensive modernization of the further and continuing education system is achieved and the national obligation to ensure "lifelong further and continuing education" is emphasized (see above). It grants the Individual Right to Vocational Training and Education (*droit individuel à la formation – DIF*) for all salaried employees and a right to skills assessment (*droit au bilan de compétences*); it provides an entitlement to a vocational training contract referring in particular to the integration of young people and job seekers into the labor market (*contrat de professionnalisation*); it supports education and training measures for specific target groups, in particular illiterate persons; and, finally, it increases employers' mandatory contribution to the equal fund system for financing vocational further and continuing education up to 1.6 percent of gross annual wages (see chapter 4).

**2005: Law 2005-102 of 11 February 2005 dealing with equal rights and opportunities, participation and citizenship of people with special needs** (*Loi 2005-102 du 11 février 2005, titre V, chapitre II*): Launch of Departmental Centers for People with Special Needs (*Maison départementale des personnes handicapées – MDPH*). These centers constitute a single agency for all issues related to questions of special needs. Furthermore, the law fosters the right of each child and adolescent to pursue his or her educational and professional career by making necessary accommodations. Similar rights are set out with regard to working life.

2000s
<p><b>2006: Law no. 2006-450 of 18 April 2006 for research guidance</b> (<i>Loi de programme no 2006-450 du 18 avril 2006 pour la recherche</i>) redefines the general framework for French research organizations. Inter alia, quality assurance processes are brought forward as an Agency for Evaluation of Research and for Higher Education (<i>Agence d'évaluation de la recherche et l'enseignement supérieur – AERES</i>) is founded, and, likewise, the recognition of a doctoral degree in the labor market sector (with regard e. g. to payment or promotion) is strengthened.</p> <p><b>2007: Law no. 2007-1199 of 10 August 2007 relating to university freedoms and responsibilities</b> (<i>Loi n°2007-1199 du 10 août 2007 relative aux libertés et responsabilités des universités</i>): The law intends to give all universities the means to be fully autonomous as to their budgets and human-resource management by transforming them into legal entities (Public Institutions of a Scientific, Cultural and Vocational Nature = <i>Etablissements publics à caractère scientifique, culturel et professionnel – EPSCPs</i>).</p> <p><b>2009: Law no. 2009-1437 of 24 November 2009, relating to lifelong guidance and vocational training</b> (<i>Loi 2009-1437 relative à l'orientation et à la formation professionnelle tout au long de la vie</i>): Again, the continuing vocational training system is brought forward: The Individual Right to Vocational Training (<i>droit individuel de formation – DIF</i>) is further strengthened by launching new measures and the tasks of the Joint Organization of Accredited Collectors (<i>organismes paritaires collecteurs agréés – OPCA</i>) in charge of the equal fund system are enlarged. Likewise, a National Council for Lifelong Further and Continuing Education (<i>Conseil national de la formation professionnelle tout au long de la vie</i>) is founded in order to support coordination in the field of state, regional councils and social and economic partners.</p>
2010s
<p><b>2013: Law no. 2013-660 of 22 July 2013 on Higher Education and Research</b> (<i>Loi n°2013-660 du 22 juillet 2013 relative à l'enseignement supérieur et à la recherche</i>) sets the latest revision of the higher education and research framework. It aims inter alia at reducing social or cultural inequalities in access to and successful completion of higher education as well as strengthening the pathways from secondary education to higher education. An emphasis on research is intended via measures developing territorial coordination of institutions and ensuring international visibility of research (see chapter 9).</p> <p><b>2014: Law no. 2014-288 of 5 March 2014 on vocational education and training, employment and social democracy</b> (<i>Loi no 2014-288 du 5 mars 2014 relative à la formation professionnelle, à l'emploi et à la démocratie sociale</i>) replaces the traditional Individual Right to Vocational Training (<i>droit individuel de formation – DIF</i>) from January 2015 onwards by an Individual Learning Account (<i>compte personnel de formation – CPF</i>). The latter is meant to follow each person in his or her professional career throughout the lifespan, even through periods of unemployment. The account is accredited with a maximum of 150 hours over nine years. Furthermore, a comprehensive National Council for Employment, Vocational Training, Education and Guidance (<i>Conseil national de l'emploi, de la formation et de l'orientation professionnelles – CNEFOP</i>) is founded (see above).</p>

Table 2: France adult and continuing education: Overview core legislation from the 1940s until the 2010s  
(Source: Author's illustration)

## 4. Financing Adult and Continuing Education

In France, adult and continuing education is financed by several stakeholders: the state, regions, companies and, not least, the individual learner. Funding schemes<sup>15</sup> are not always clear-cut, they often involve a mixture of several actors; yet, some general funding lines can be drawn. In the following, this is carried out by differentiating funding schemes according to stakeholders on the one hand and to adult learning beneficiaries on the other.

### Funding Schemes by Stakeholder

In 2012, the financiers of adult and continuing education in France provided a total expenditure of 32 billion euros on further and continuing education (0.2 % less than in 2011), representing 1.52 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) (cf. FFP, 2014; DARES ANALYSES, 2015). The different stakeholders can be grouped as follows (as follows in fig. 4):

The stakeholders' respective shares identify enterprises as the main financiers (43 %), whereas the state and the regions are equivalent in their expenditure (14 %). In 2012, two stakeholders increased their expenditures significantly in comparison to the previous year: These are the private households (+ 4.2 %) and, furthermore, autonomous bodies undertaking public tasks (+ 4.5 %) like the State Employment Agency or the Association in charge of the fund for Vocational Integration of People with Special Needs (*Association de gestion du fonds pour l'insertion professionnelle des personnes handicapées* – AGEFIPH).

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15 Relevant data is available mainly on the basis of analyses provided by the Directorate for Research, Studies and Statistics (*Direction de l'animation de la recherche, des études et des statistiques* – DARES), referring first and foremost to the annual monitoring of further and continuing education providers in France (whole territory), the BPF (*Bilan Pédagogique et Financier*) (see chapter 3).

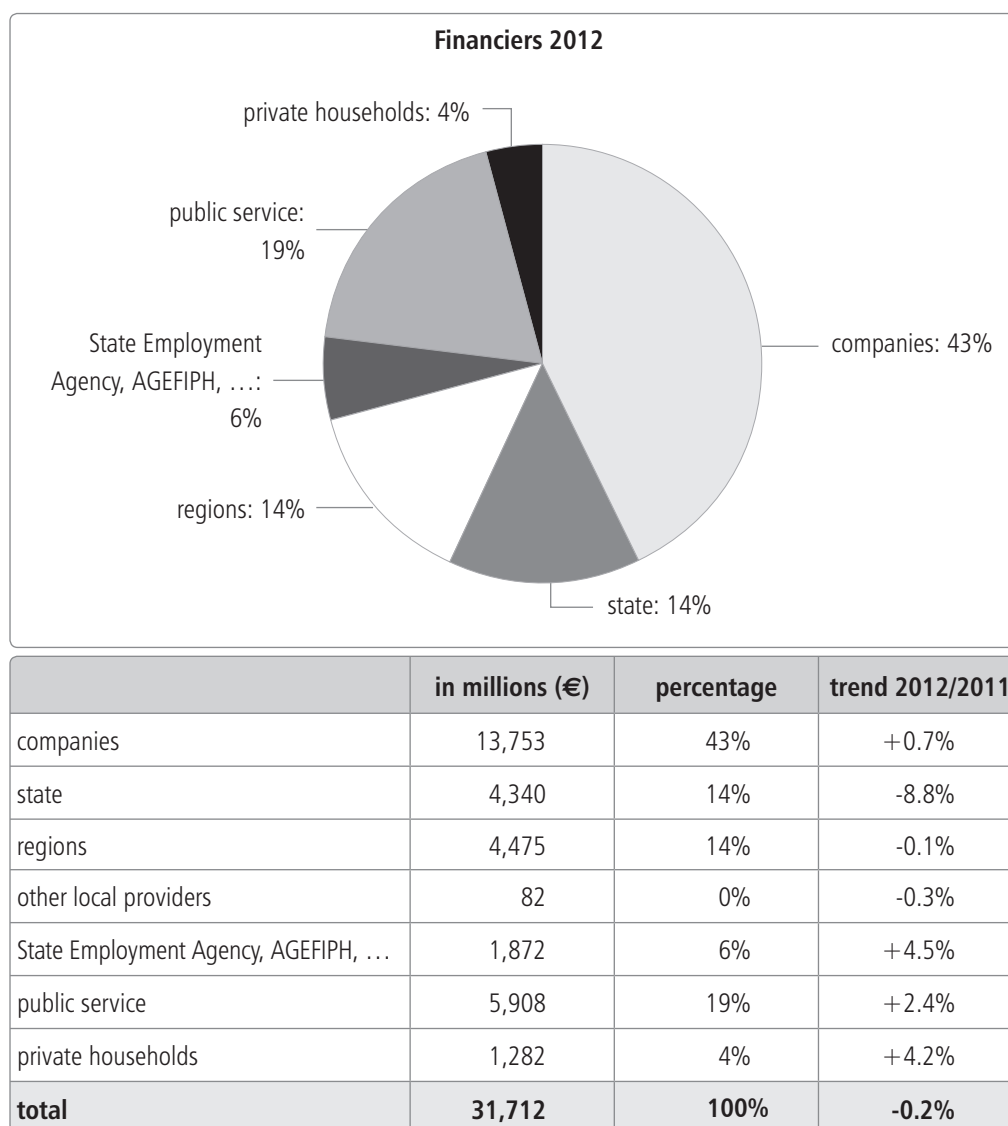


Figure 4: The main financiers of adult and continuing education in France (2012).

Range: France whole territory (Source: Author's own graph based on FFP, 2014)

## Companies

As the data clearly show, enterprises serve as the main financiers of further and continuing education in France (cf. DARES ANALYSES, 2014a, 2015).

A comparison with the rest of Europe is instructive: Total company expenditure on continuing and further education in France is exactly twice as high as in the EU as a whole. In 2010, the level of funding was 1.6 percent of the total labor cost, compared to 0.8 percent for the EU (as total monetary expenditure by companies on such courses as percent of total labor cost) (cf. CEDEFOP, 2013, pp. 44–47).

The umbrella principle of this funding scheme is “train or pay” (*former ou payer*, DARES ANALYSES, 2014a, p. 1). Obligatorily since the Delors law of 1971 (see chapter 3), companies have to invest a certain amount (a percentage of gross annual wages depending on company size) in further and continuing education. This comprises two funding lines:

- *Equal fund system:*

Companies with more than ten employees are obliged to contribute to an equal fund system for the financing of further and continuing education. This mandatory contribution increased to 1.6 percent of gross annual wages for companies with 20 and more employees and to 1.05 percent for companies with ten to 19 employees. Since 1991, the obligation has been expanded to companies with less than ten employees; they have to pay a contribution of 0.55 percent of their total salaries distributed. These contributions are collected in an equal fund system and redistributed within or between sectors by two Joint Organizations of Accredited Collectors (*Organismes paritaires collecteurs agréés au titre de la formation professionnelle* – OPCA; *Organismes paritaires collecteurs agréés au titre du CIF* – OPACIF).

- *Education tax:*

In addition, companies have to pay a so-called education tax (*taxe d'apprentissage*). This tax is fixed at 0.68 percent of the total salaries paid in the previous year. Companies may pay this tax either in form by covering equivalent costs for the direct further and continuing education of their employees, by paying other social benefits or by transferring the sum to the French treasury. The Collectors Organizations of the Education Tax (*Organismes collecteurs de la taxe d'apprentissage* – OCTA) are in charge of collecting these contributions. Up to half of the proceeds are redistributed to the providers of vocational education and training (e. g. the Centres for Vocational Education and Training (*Centres de formation d'apprentis* – CFA); the rest goes to the regions (and their further autonomous distribution) and to those adult education providers that were chosen by the companies initially.

In 2012, companies' costs amounted to 43 percent of the total national expenditure on further and continuing education (cf. DARES ANALYSES, 2015, pp. 2–3); these 13.7 billion euros were distributed as follows:

- 81 percent to persons in employment in the private sector;
- 15 percent to young people (that is 8 % vocational training (either via the education tax to the CFAs (see above) or directly to single CFAs) and 7 % Vocational Training Contracts (CPF));
- 3 percent to job seekers.

Due to these substantial costs, companies contributed more than one third (37.6 %) to the total business volume of all providers in the adult and continuing education sector in France in 2012 and were thus by far the main financier for these providers (cf. FFP, 2014, Annex 2; DARES ANALYSES, 2015).

## State

Zooming to the state level, and as shown in chapter 3, there is a two-fold funding responsibility embodied by two Ministries:

- The Ministry of National Education, Higher Education and Research finances initial (vocational) education and training and networks of local institutions (GRETA networks, see chapter 5) providing a wide range of adult and continuing education offers.
- The Ministry of Labor, Employment, Vocational Training and Social Dialogue finances in particular adult education measures for specific target-groups (migrants, senior citizens, people with special needs, prison inmates, basic education in numeracy, literacy and so on).

In total, the state contributed 4.3 billion euros, representing 14 percent of the national expenditure on further and continuing education in 2012; however, this meant 8.8 percent less than in the previous year (cf. DARES ANALYSES, 2015, p. 2).

The costs are spread as follows in descending order:

- 36 percent initial vocational education and training (thereof 5 % for the integration of young people in education (e. g. second chance schools; *écoles de la 2e chance – E2C*);
- 36 percent civil servants;
- 16 percent persons in employment of the private sector (e. g. subsidies for the CNAM, the GRETAs, Centre Inffo etc., further education within the scope of higher education, Accreditation of Prior Learning – VAE);
- 11 percent job seekers.

Whereas the financial support for persons in employment in the private sector has increased in comparison to 2011 (+ 5.7 %), the expenditure for young people in particular (initial training and integration) has decreased substantially (- 14.6 %). This

was the main contributing factor in the overall decline of 8.8 percent of the national expenditure on further and continuing education (DARES ANALYSES, 2015, p. 6) and was largely due to the expiry of a national action plan (2009–2010) launched by the Sarkozy government on combating youth unemployment.

However, in comparison with the European Union (EU), the data on public expenditure on initial vocational education and training (at upper secondary and post-secondary level – ISCED 3 and 4) show relatively high scores for France in 2010: Public expenditure was almost twice as high as for the EU as a whole with 14,813 euros per student compared to 8,549 respectively (cf. CEDEFOP, 2013, pp. 44–46).

## Regions

Equivalent to the state share, the regions financed 14 percent of total national expenditure on further and continuing education (4.47 billion euros) (cf. DARES ANALYSES, 2015, pp. 2, 5). According to the strengthened power of the regional governance level, regions are significantly involved in financing vocational training and education. Their contribution divides into:

- 61 percent young people (thereof 42 percent for initial vocational education and training (*apprentissage*));
- 24 percent job seekers;
- 9 percent persons employed by the private sector;
- 4 percent investment;
- 2 percent civil servants.

Yet the concrete extent of provisions may vary from one region to the next due to their respective regional agreements (*Contrat de Plan Régional de Développement des Formations – CPRDF*) on prioritizing policies according to their specific social and economic constraints (see chapter 3). Thus, some regions also provide financial support to salaried employees to attend higher education courses off the job (e. g. within the scope of distance education).

Nevertheless, the regions' main financial responsibility remains the (initial) vocational education and training of young people, representing in total numbers a bigger share of expenditure than that at the state level (cf. DARES ANALYSES, 2015, p. 5).

## Stakeholders Providing a Public Service

As autonomous bodies, but performing a public service, stakeholders like the State Employment Agency (see chapter 3) or the Association in charge of the fund for Vocational Integration of People with Special Needs (*Association de gestion du fonds pour l'insertion professionnelle des personnes handicapées – AGEFIPH*) have to be taken into account. In total, their expenditure in 2012 amounted to 1.8 billion euros (6 % of the total national expenditure on further and continuing education in that year), which was an increase of 4.5 percent on the previous year (cf. DARES ANALYSES, 2015, p. 2).

The AGEFIPH (in particular) raised its costs due to qualification and labor market integration measures on behalf of persons with special needs, a responsibility that

had been delegated to the AGEFIPH in 2010 from the Association for Vocational Training and Education of Adults (*Association pour la formation professionnelle des adultes – AFPA*) (see chapters 3, 5).

### **Public Service and Private Households**

Further education and training expenses for administrative employees of the three-tier system of public service (state, regional authorities (*collectivités territoriales*), public hospitals) amounted to 19 percent of total national expenditure in 2014 (cf. DARES ANALYSES, 2015, p. 2).

Finally, private households are the second stakeholder group that significantly increased its expenditure in comparison to 2011 (+ 4.2 %): They contributed 4 percent of the total national expenditure on further and continuing education (cf. ib.).

### **Funding Schemes by Adult Learning Beneficiary**

Another perspective on the financing of adult and continuing education in France can be achieved by complementing the stakeholder perspective with a differentiation according to the recipients of adult and continuing education funds (see fig. 5).



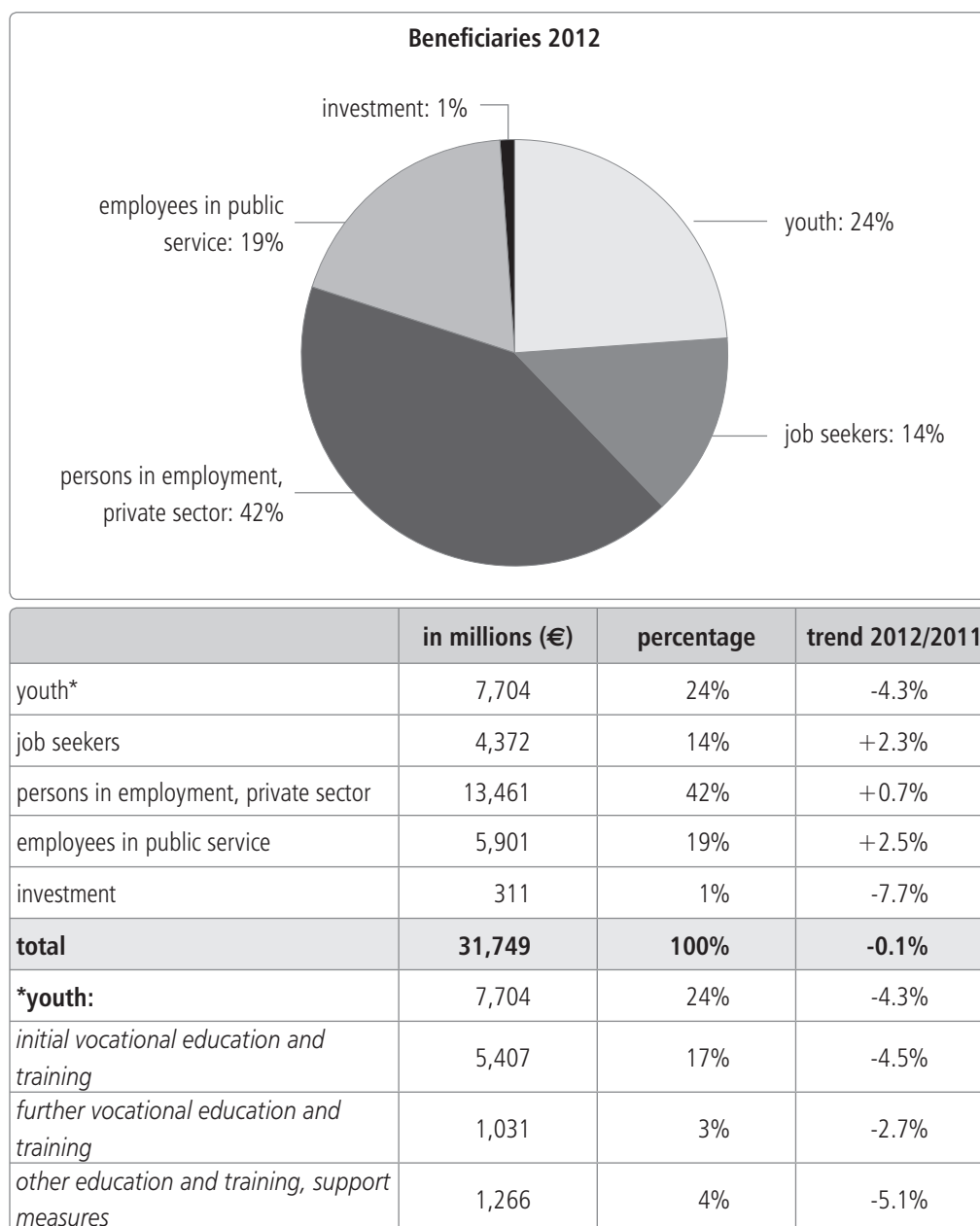


Figure 5: The main beneficiaries of adult and continuing education in France (2012).

Range: France whole territory (Source: Author's own table based on DARES ANALYSES, 2015)

Figure 5 on the recipients of total national funding for further and continuing education in 2012 clarifies that, with 42 percent, persons employed in the private sector are the main beneficiaries of expenditure. They are followed by young people (those e. g. in vocational education and training) (24 %) and then, with 19 percent, by the employees in public service. Job seekers were financed with only 14 percent of total national expenditure in 2012.

Employees have access to measures (see chapters 3, 6) like

- the Individual Learning Account (*compte personnel de formation – CPF*)
- Individual Training Leave (*congé individuel de formation – CIF*)
- regional-based funding, e. g. to attend higher education courses off the job (e. g. within the scope of distance education)
- an Individual Adult Education Plan (*plan de formation*), funded by the employers and linked to the current job activity. The Plan allows employees to attend – first and foremost short-term – further and continuing education measures during work-time; employees cannot refuse to participate.

Young people, meaning those e. g. in initial vocational education and training (see fig. 5), must also be highlighted as adult learning beneficiaries. Initial vocational education and training (*apprentissage*) refers to young people between 16 and 25 years and to learning settings organized in dual systems (*en alternance*), alternating between companies and the Centers for Vocational Education and Training (*Centres de formation d'apprentis – CFA*). Apprentices (*les apprentis*) receive an apprenticeship contract (*contrat d'apprentissage*), stating also their remuneration (provided partly by company and state subsidies) and are supervised on site in the companies by a training officer (*maître d'apprentissage*).

Job seekers receive funds for attending further and continuing education mainly on behalf of the regional authorities and/or the State Employment Agency, e. g. within the scope of the individual entitlement to a Vocational Training Contract (*contrat de professionnalisation*; created in Law no. 2004-391 of May 2004 on lifelong vocational training and social dialogue) (see chapter 3). Such contracts are aimed, in general, at supporting young people aged 16 to 25 to complete their initial vocational education and training; they are also meant for job seekers aged 26 and older and registered with the State Employment Agency or also for recipients of particular benefit schemes (e. g. *revenu de solidarité active – RSA*, *allocation de solidarité spécifique – ASS*, *allocation aux adultes handicapés – AAH*).

Figure 6 below reveals the fundamentally modified conditions of the financing schemes according to the different stakeholders in charge of funding the further and continuing education of job seekers: The state has transferred most of its financial responsibilities to the regional level, and other actors such as the State Employment Agency or the AGEFIPH have entered the scene:

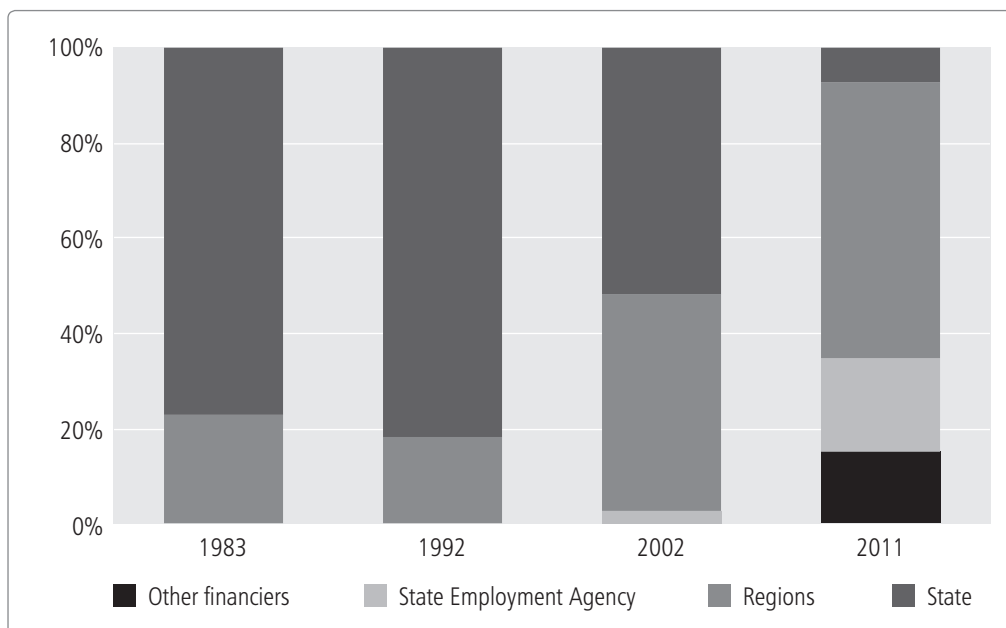


Figure 6: Distribution of job seekers starting further and continuing education according to their main financiers in France (2011). Range: Metropolitan France (Source: Author's own graph based on Formations et emploi, 2013)

The position of persons with special needs was strengthened by the law of February 2005 on equal rights and opportunities, participation and citizenship of people with special needs (*Loi 2005-102 du 11 février 2005, titre V, chapitre II*) (see chapter 3). In 2011, about 370,000 persons with special needs were employed by 100,100 private or public employers (cf. AGEFIPH & FIPFHP, 2014).

In order to receive – also financial – support and guidance in matters of employment and adult and continuing education, adults with special needs can address, for example, the fund for Vocational Integration of People with Special Needs (*Association de gestion du fonds pour l'insertion professionnelle des personnes handicapées – AGEFIPH*). The AGEFIPH works closely together with inter alia the state employment agency (*Pôle emploi*), the regional stakeholders and also the Center for Vocational Education and Training (*Centres de formation d'apprentis – CFA*) in order to ensure adequate qualification and lifelong learning opportunities for all. A similar task is delegated to the regionally based Service Agencies Integration through Work (*Établissement et service d'aide par le travail – ESAT*), which are responsible for social and professional (re-)integration ensuring initial formal education and developing vocational competences via more or less sheltered employment schemes. Subsidized by the state, the Service Agencies are regionally managed by non-profit organizations.

Whereas the new law of February 2005 was meant to overcome the traditional segregation between sheltered versus regular employment and education schemes and led to increased budgets for further and continuing training expenses, a survey reveals a very heterogeneous implementation of this mission in the various regional agencies, and, not least, a continuing focus on providing (sheltered) employment rather than developing holistic personal lifelong learning pathways (cf. Baret, 2013; see also Leguy, Guitton, & Amoureux, 2013).

To sum up, a wide range of funding schemes is available for different types of adult learning beneficiaries, provided by stakeholders according to their respective responsibilities or entrepreneurial objectives. This leads to the French profile of institutional arrangements in the adult and continuing education sector.

## 5. Institutions

Adult and continuing education in its two-fold French differentiation into lifelong learning (*la formation tout au long de la vie*) and further and continuing education (*formation professionnelle continue*) is delivered in a wide range of institutional arrangements.<sup>16</sup> Similar to many of its European neighbor countries, the French arena of adult and continuing education providers is heterogeneous and manifold. Yet unlike other countries, for example, Germany, organizations of the private sector, whether profit- or non-profit-oriented, almost exclusively dominate this picture. This is in line with the general funding streams and the historical development paths along the establishment of a huge open further and continuing education market according to the Delors Law in 1971 (see chapter 4).

It is, however, possible to identify the following main stakeholders who regulate and/or contribute substantially to the arena of adult and continuing education providers (see also chapter 3 and 4):

- the state: by overseeing and regulating the adult education policy framework; by financing significant shares; and by providing further and continuing education via the GRETA networks;
- the regions: via their respective agreements between the state and the Regional Councils on prioritizing adult education policies according to their regionally specific social and economic constraints (*Contrat de Plan Régional de Développement des Formations – CPRDF*);
- the social partners: by taking part in negotiating agreements, standards and schemes, e. g. in form of employers' and employees' organizations, trade unions, professional associations (chambers etc.) and the like;
- companies: by being the main financiers of further and continuing education.

In 2012 (see table 3), there were all in all roughly 60,000 organizations actively engaged in the French arena of adult and continuing education providers, realizing a total business volume of 13.5 million euros with 24,000 participants and over 1 million training hours provided (cf. République Française, 2015, p. 146; FFP, 2014, Annex 1). The comparatively high number of organizations gives rise to a rather fragmented market situation.

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16 Relevant data is available mainly on the basis of analyses provided by the Directorate for Research, Studies and Statistics (*Direction de l'animation de la recherche, des études et des statistiques (DARES)*), referring first and foremost to the annual monitoring of further and continuing education providers in France (whole territory), the BPF (*Bilan Pédagogique et Financier*) (see chapter 3).

	providers	trend 2011/2010	business volume	trend 2011/2010	number of participants	trend 2011/2010	number of teaching hours	trend 2012/2011
	(absolute numbers)	(%)	(in mill. €)	(%)	(in thousand)	(%)	(in thousand)	(%)
<b>together</b>	<b>62,658</b>	<b>+6,8</b>	<b>13,555</b>	<b>+3,6</b>	<b>24,355</b>	<b>+2,2</b>	<b>1,155,471</b>	<b>+4,1</b>
according to type (%)								
profit-oriented private sector	54	+8.2	50	+5.3	54	+5.4	45	+7.4
non-profit oriented private sector	20	+2.9	25	+0.9	26	-3.4	22	-0.6
individual providers	23	+7.6	3	-4.4	7	+5.6	6	-10.0
semi-/public providers	3	+1.4	21	+4.5	14	-0.7	27	+6.5
according to business volume (%)								
less than 75,000 euros	73	+8.6	6	+6.1	15	+8.0	9	+3.7
75,000 to 150,000 euros	9	+1.6	5	+1.5	7	+3.5	6	-9.2
150,000 to 750,000 euros	13	+1.8	19	+1.3	22	0.0	24	-7.9
750,000 to 1,500,000 euros	3	+5.8	13	+5.0	13	+8.5	17	+30.3
1,500,000 to 3,000,000 euros	1	+2.1	14	+3.0	12	-4.0	11	-2.2
more than 3,000,000 euros	1	+0.2	44	+4.3	31	+0.6	32	+9.3

Table 3: Adult and continuing education providers in France (2012). Range: France whole territory (Source: Author's own table based on FFP, 2014, Annex 1)

Of these roughly 60,000 organizations, nearly one third (19,500) have further and continuing education as their main activity (*activité principale exercée – APE*) (cf. République Française, 2015, p. 147). This marks an increase of 8 percent of the total numbers of such providers since 2008. Main activities in this sense cover:

- secondary education with a general focus (APE code 85.31Z);
- secondary education with a technical or vocational focus (APE code 85.32Z);
- post-secondary education, excluding higher education (APE code 85.41Z);
- higher education (APE code 85.42Z);
- adult and continuing education (APE code 85.59A);
- other types of teaching (APE code 59.B).

Considering the percentage distribution of the providers, one can sum up that a small number of large organizations (5 % of all organizations, those realizing more than 750,000 euros p. a. business volume) together contributed 71 percent to the total business volume in 2012, whereas the significant majority of all organizations (82 %) represent smaller organizations, each up to an annual business volume of 150,000 euros (cf. ib., p. 146). Due to the significance of these few large organizations, relevant actors will be introduced in more detail below.

Looking on the other hand to the total numbers of providers, organizations of the private sector (both non-profit and profit-oriented organizations and individual providers) are clearly predominant. They represented 97 percent of all adult and continuing education providers in 2012 (cf. ib.).

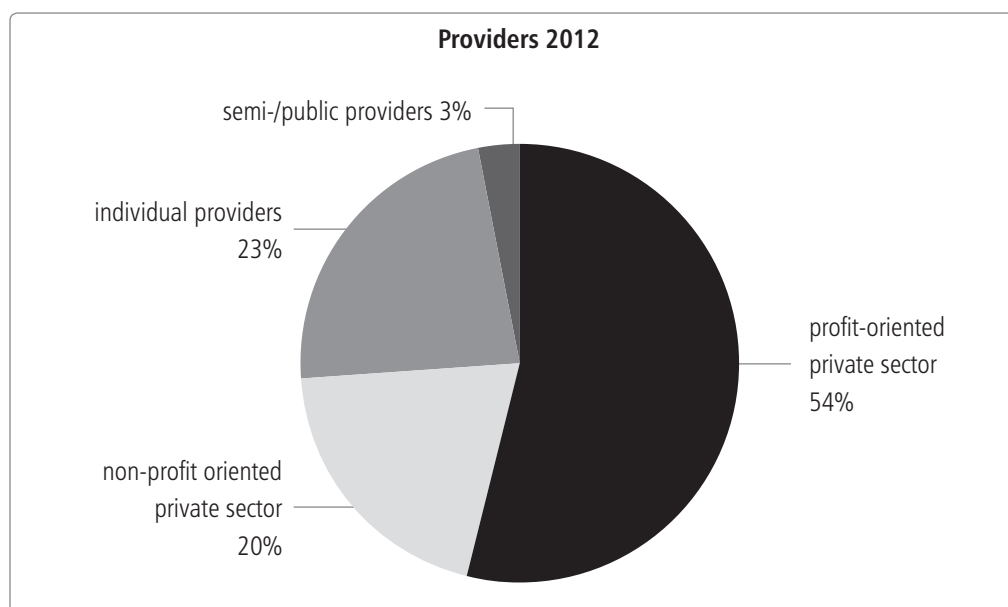


Figure 7: Proportions of adult and continuing education providers in France (2012) (in %).

Range: France whole territory (Source: Author's own graph based on FFP, 2014, Annex 1)

This tripartite segment of organizations of the private sector was responsible for reaching 87 percent of all participants in adult and continuing education in 2012 (cf. ib., p. 149; FFP, 2014, Annex 3) (see table 4).

type of provider	employees	job seekers	individual learners	other participants	together
profit-oriented private sector	63	31	31	31	<b>54</b>
non-profit oriented private sector	18	45	32	47	<b>26</b>
individual providers	7	4	7	9	<b>7</b>
semi-/public providers	12	20	30	13	<b>14</b>
<b>together</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
trend 2012/2011 (%)	+3.5	-5.1	+2.3	+0.9	+2.2

Table 4: Proportions of participants by adult and continuing education provider

in France (2012) (in %). Range: France whole territory

(Source: Author's own table based on FFP, 2014, Annex 3)



In order to further differentiate the landscape of providers, several classifications are feasible as to e. g. their legal status, their service and products portfolio or their access possibilities for adult learners. In order to make best use of the data-base available, the French arena of adult and continuing education providers is outlined in the following pursuant to its business type, belonging to the profit-oriented private sector, to the non-profit oriented private sector, to individual providers or to the public or semi-public sector.

## Profit-Oriented Private Sector

More than half of all providers in the private adult and continuing education sector are financed by profit-oriented organizations (54 %) (see table 3 and fig. 7) (cf. République Française, 2015, p. 146). These profit-oriented organizations are responsible for roughly half of the total activities in this sector: They contribute 50 percent to the total business volume, they are engaged with 54 percent of the participants and deliver 45 percent of the total training hours provided. Figures are still increasing, representing an average rise of 6 percent in all the segments in relation to the previous year 2011.

In 2012, companies gave more than half of their expenditure on adult and continuing education to these profit-oriented organizations (69.2 %), followed by contributions of other adult and continuing education organizations (52.1 %), of the Joint Organizations of Accredited Collectors (OPCA/OPACIF) (51.7 %) and of individuals (51.3 %) (cf. *ib.*, p. 148).

These data and the total distribution of participants across the different provider types show, perhaps unsurprisingly, that these providers predominantly reach persons in employment (63 %) as distinguished from the total numbers of the participation of job seekers (31 %), individuals (31 %) or other learners (31 %) (see table 4) (cf. *ib.*, p. 149).

## Non-Profit Oriented Private Sector

The non-profit oriented providers in the French adult and continuing education arena are of particular relevance for the wide range of non-formal learning opportunities. They rank second place after the profit-oriented ones according to business volume and training hours delivered (see table 3) (cf. *ib.*, p. 146), ensuring a myriad of associations, cooperatives, foundations, syndicates and the like.

Thus, in absolute figures they constitute roughly one in five providers. In percentage distribution, this amounts to 25 percent of the total business volume achieved, to 26 percent of all participants reached and to 22 percent of the total training hours delivered in the year 2012 (see table 3) (cf. *ib.*). Figures highlight that the non-profit oriented providers attain the biggest share (45 %) of job seekers who participated in 2012 (see table 4) (cf. *ib.*, p. 149).

The rich historical trajectories of this sector refer to the ideas of permanent education (*éducation permanente*), popular adult education as *éducation populaire* movement or also self-education (*auto-formation*) and mental training methods (*entraînement mental*) (see chapter 2), fed by sources from secular (*laïque*) education traditions (Condorcet), humanistic-Christian traditions (in particular inspired by the Catholic religion) or also those of the labor movement.

Up to today these associations and federations play an indispensable part in offering formal, non-formal and informal learning opportunities by means of public libraries, excursions, sports clubs, community and/or citizenship education, voluntary work and much more. If public subsidies are granted for their work, they are derived mostly from the Ministry of Youth and Sports (*Ministère de la Jeunesse et des Sports*) and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (*Ministère des Affaires sociales et de la Santé*), to a lesser degree from the Ministry of National Education.

In order to illustrate the diversity of providers, selected examples are highlighted:

- *Amicale Laïque* movement (see chapter 2)
- *Peuple et Culture*: a network of adult education associations (*réseau d'associations d'éducation populaire*) combating inequality in access to culture (*inégalités culturelles*) and supporting people's right to access the world of knowledge and learning across the lifespan (*le droit de savoir tout au long de la vie*).
- *Universités Populaires* (folk universities): Inspired by Grundtvig's ideas and the Danish *folkehøjskoler*, the first folk university opened in 1897 in Bourges, followed one year later by another in Paris. Today, they are coordinated by the *Association des Universités Populaires de France (AUPF)*, the umbrella organization for the different branches (*Universités populaires – UP*, *Universités du temps libre – UTL*, *Universités inter-âges – UIA* and *Universités pour tous – UPT*).
- *Association pour l'Insertion sociale et professionnelle des Personnes handicapées (ADAPT)*: Since 1929, this association has supported people with special needs to fully participate in the community and the world of work, inter alia by means of offering non-formal and formal adult education courses.
- *Ligue de l'Enseignement*: Founded in 1866, it is one of the largest umbrella organizations for secular adult education associations in France with roughly 30,000 affiliated associations.
- *Comité pour les relations nationales et internationales des associations de jeunesse et d'éducation populaire (CNAJEP)*: Umbrella organization for more than 70 associations working in the youth and popular education sector, e. g. the listed *Ligue française de l'enseignement*.

## Individual Providers

Interestingly, the total number of individual providers in the private adult and continuing education sector rank second place after the profit-oriented organizations (23 % in 2012), whereas they contribute with only 3 percent to the total business volume (- 4.4 % in 2011), reach 7 percent of all participants involved in learning activities and contribute with 6 percent (- 10 % in 2011) to the training hours delivered (see table 3 and fig. 7) (cf. République Française, 2015, p. 146).

The decline in business volume and training hours evened out the substantial increase monitored in the same segments in 2011 almost entirely (+ 6.7 % increase in business volume and + 5.4 % in training hours in 2011; DARES ANALYSES, 2013, p. 2).

## Public and Semi-Public Sector

Some of the largest stakeholders in the French adult and continuing education arena belong to the public or semi-public sector: the AFPA as the Association for Vocational Training and Education of Adults (*Association pour la formation professionnelle des adultes – AFPA*), affiliated to the Ministry of Labor, and the public providers of the so-called National Education (*Éducation nationale*) with inter alia the GRETA networks under the responsibility of the Ministry of National Education.

Furthermore, providers like the professional chambers are included in this sector, operating as public institutions in the interests of stakeholders of the private market. Dating back to the 16th century, they are grouped together as *chambres consulaires*, operating in issues of agriculture, industry and trade or crafts (*Chambre d'Agriculture; Chambres de Commerce et d'Industrie – CCI; Chambre de Métiers et de l'Artisanat*). Though the semi-/public organizations are by absolute numbers clearly the smallest unit (3 % of all providers), they rank second place in training hours delivered (27 %), reach 14 percent of all participants and contribute 21 percent to the total business volume of all providers in 2012 (see table 3 and fig. 7) (cf. République Française, 2015, p. 146). The decrease in the absolute figures of the participants with a simultaneous rise in the business volume (+ 4.5 %) and the training hours given (+ 6.5 %) compared to 2011 points to more expensive and prolonged offers in this sector.

The above mentioned stakeholders are key actors in the adult and continuing education arena and are thus briefly introduced here:

- Association for Vocational Training and Education of Adults (*Association pour la formation professionnelle des adultes – AFPA*):

According to its legal form, the AFPA is a non-profit association; however, due to its traditionally strong link with the public service (the national State Employment Agency (*Pôle emploi*), see chapter 3) and the state itself in form of the Ministry of Labor and its annual subsidies, the AFPA is assigned data-wise to the

semi-public sector (cf. DARES ANALYSES, 2013, p. 3). Founded in 1949 in the aftermath of the Second World War and during the reconstruction of postwar France, its core fields of work continue to be vocational training and further and continuing education leading to qualifications. Focus is on the (re-)integration of job seekers into the labor market and on the support of employees in adapting or widening their competence portfolio. The AFPA implements its courses in collaboration with other semi-public organizations, the regions or the companies. In accordance with their affiliation to the Ministry of Labor, job seekers represent their main clientele, and this is mirrored in the high percentage share of the total expenses of the public sector in favour of individual learners that the AFPA receives (in 2012, the AFPA received 16.3 % of these total expenses; cf. République Française, 2015, p. 148).

Restructuring processes according to their funding and their staff structure accelerated a reconfiguration of their services and provision to a more demand-driven outline (state subsidies and its distribution procedure were partly transferred to the regions within decentralization reforms in 2008; moreover, in 2010, more than 900 AFPA employees were moved to the Employment Agency's guidance and counselling service; see chapter 3).

- The providers of National Education (*Éducation nationale*) comprise to one third higher education institutions (for example *Grandes écoles* and universities). Altogether, they are responsible for 32 percent of the total business volume of the semi-/public sector organizations, contributing with 7 percent to the total business volume of all adult and continuing education providers (cf. République Française, 2015, p. 145).

For adult and continuing education, three lines of actors are most relevant:

Firstly, the National Conservatory of Arts and Crafts (*Conservatoire national des Arts et Métiers – CNAM*), founded in 1794 and operated today as a *Grande école* by the government (Ministry of National Education), runs more than 150 campuses in Metropolitan France and its overseas departments. Under its historical mission *docet omnes ubique* (education for everyone, everywhere), it declares its task to be that of providing further and continuing *higher* education across the adult lifespan (*formation professionnelle supérieure tout au long de la vie des adultes*; AERES, 2013, p. 5). Since 2010, the CNAM has been structured in two schools, one offering further and continuing education in industrial sciences and information technology (*Sciences industrielles et Technologies de l'Information*) and one in management and social sciences focused on the entrepreneurial context (*Management et Société*). In 2011, it provided courses for over 90,000 participants (ib.).

Secondly, the National Center for Distance Education (*Centre national d'Enseignement à distance – CNED*), founded in 1939 under the necessities of wartime, is similarly structured as a public institution (Ministry of National Education) with campuses in Metropolitan France and its overseas departments. Its focus is on distance and e-learning and its products and services supply all learn-

ing levels across the lifespan. In 2013, 226,100 students were enrolled, of which 13 percent live in the overseas departments, and, furthermore, of which 50 percent attend higher education courses (CNED, 2014, p. 4).

Thirdly, the GRETA networks (*Groupements d'Établissements publics Locaux d'Enseignement*) have to be highlighted as one of the most relevant actors in French adult and continuing education. Launched in 1974 and based in every department (Metropolitan France as well as overseas), they are coordinated by regional (*académie*) and national (Ministry of National Education) units. In 2014, there were 191 GRETA networks in France. In each network, public lower and upper secondary schools are grouped together pursuant to their geographical proximity on departmental level. They offer further and continuing vocational education for job seekers, employees and individual learners, tailor-made for local adult and continuing education demand and provided also beyond their network affiliations, e. g. in companies or prisons.

The following chapter will elaborate on the portfolio of provision offered by the arena of adult and continuing education providers outlined above.

## 6. Provision

Against the backdrop of the respective institutional responsibilities and leitmotifs, there are the manifold societal, political, individual and/or entrepreneurial demands that continuously influence the range of adult and continuing education offers in France. General characteristics are introduced here, firstly by taking a look at overarching criteria like teaching hours and major topic areas, and then by referring to specific provision portfolios for e. g. adult learners in employment or for having prior experience and non-formal learning activities recognized and validated.<sup>17</sup>

### General Outlook: Teaching Hours, Participants, Major Topic Areas

In 2011, an adult and continuing education course lasted 48 hours on average (see table 5) (cf. DARES ANALYSES, 2013, p. 5).

type of provider	employees	job seekers	individual learners	other participants	average	trend 2011/2010 (%)
profit-oriented private sector	39	45	98	36	<b>41</b>	-2.4
non-profit oriented private sector	35	76	66	23	<b>42</b>	0,0
individual providers	54	60	49	40	<b>51</b>	6,3
semi-/public providers	46	190	176	53	<b>85</b>	-1,2
<b>average</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>-2,0</b>
trend 2011/2010 (%)	0.0	+3.5	-8.7	-3.0	<b>-2.0</b>	

Table 5: Average length of adult and continuing education courses by participant category and type of provider in France (2011) (in hours). Range: France whole territory  
(Source: Author's own table based on DARES ANALYSES, 2013, table 4)

Data for the different institutional stakeholders – profit-oriented and non-profit oriented private sector, individual providers, semi-/public sector (see chapter 5) – show that the average length of adult and continuing education courses is highest with the

<sup>17</sup> Relevant data is available mainly on the basis of analyses provided by the Directorate for Research, Studies and Statistics (*Direction de l'animation de la recherche, des études et des statistiques – DARES*), referring first and foremost to the annual monitoring of further and continuing education providers in France (whole territory), the BPF (*Bilan Pédagogique et Financier*) (see chapter 3).

providers of the semi-/public sector (85 hours on average). This is due to the relatively long-term courses for job seekers (190 hours on average) and individual learners (176 hours on average) (see table 5).

Correspondingly, individual learners are those attending courses with the longest average duration (105 hours), though tending towards shorter offers in comparison with the previous year ( $- 8.7 \% = - 10$  hours) (cf. ib.). They are followed by job seekers who participate in courses with 89 hours on average; this group is the only one that demonstrated an increase in the average duration of adult and continuing education courses ( $+ 3.5 \% = 3$  hours).

A longitudinal comparison of the average length of adult and continuing education courses in total – 48 hours in 2011 – allows for a more detailed view (see fig. 8):

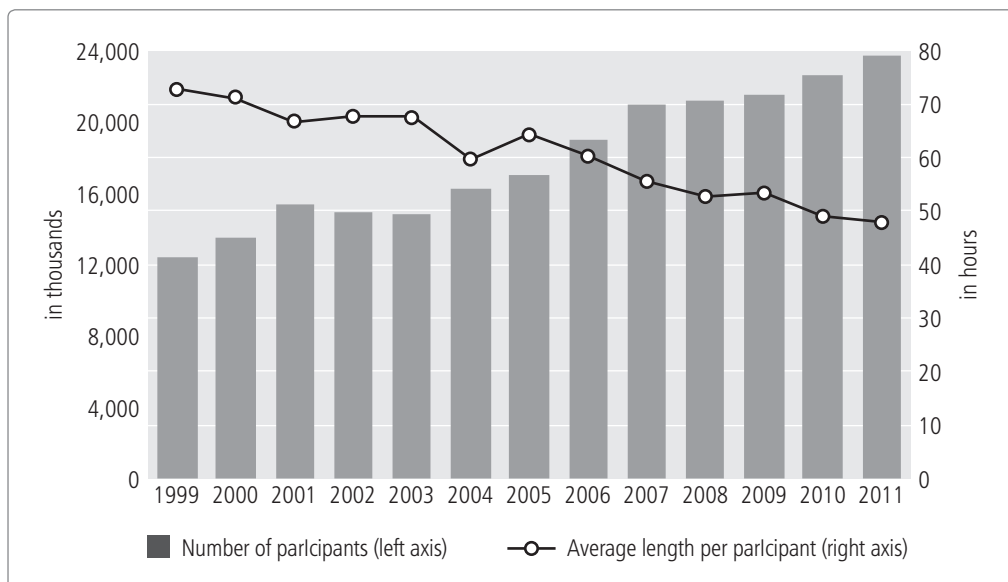


Figure 8: Participants and average length of adult and continuing education courses in France (2011).

Range: France whole territory (Source: Author's own graph based on DARES ANALYSES, 2013, table 2)

Within ten years, the average length of an adult and continuing education course has fallen by 19 hours. Several reasons can be offered to explain this trend: the increased demand for short-term modules on particular topics as a general trend in adult and continuing education provision, the ongoing impacts of economic crisis and the unemployment situation (see chapter 1), and, finally, the continuing interest of adult learners in courses of the service sector (see below) that favour short-scale measures (cf. ib., p. 6).

The latter points to the question of the most in demand topic areas of adult and continuing education courses (see table 6).

In an overarching structure, the topics can be divided into four areas:

1. general topics,
2. focus production/manufacturing,
3. focus service sector and
4. personal development topics.

In 2011, the substantial majority of adult learners and of teaching hours was recorded in the service sector area (65 % of participants, 61 % of teaching hours) (cf. ib.).

Splitting up these general areas more precisely, it is possible to identify ten topics that were most in demand in 2011, representing 60 percent of all participants and 51 percent of all teaching hours (see table 6) (cf. ib., p. 7). The average duration of courses in this particular selection is 39.2 hours, which is shorter than the average total length (48 hours).

Thus, according to the number of participants, safety courses rank clearly in first place with 11.5 percent of all participants (cf. ib., p. 7). At the same time, these courses show the lowest average duration (22.7 hours). This becomes comprehensible in taking a glance at legislative regulations, according to which companies are obliged to implement this type of safety courses.

Concerning the shares of the total teaching hours delivered in 2011, the greatest share was in courses on health topics (7.2 %), followed by trade and sales topics (5.9 %) and information and communication technology (5.8 %) (cf. ib.).



	participants (%)	teaching hours (%)	average length (in hours)
safety courses, police, surveillance (safety of persons and objects, including hygiene and security aspects)	11.5	5.6	22.7
personal development, guidance, social and professional (re-)integration	6.6	4.1	28.8
health	6.5	7.2	51.4
focus on topics of management and communication	6.4	4.0	28.9
information and communication technology	6.1	5.8	43.5
transport, handling and storage	5.8	5.1	41.5
personal development in the areas of behavior and relationships	4.5	4.3	45.0
trade and sales	4.4	5.9	61.2
human resources development, management and employment management	4.4	3.6	37.7
general adult and continuing education topics	4.2	5.5	60.1
<b>ten most demanded topics together</b>	<b>60.4</b>	<b>51.1</b>	<b>39.2</b>

Table 6: The ten most in demand topics of adult and continuing education courses in France (2011).  
Range: France whole territory (Source: Author's own table based on DARES ANALYSES, 2013, table 6)

Finally, looking at the distribution of average duration, trade and sales topics rank first place with an average duration of 61.2 hours (cf. ib.). In second place are adult and continuing education courses with general topics (60.1 hours on average), which are traditionally longer-term courses.

Moving on from this general outlook, a brief examination of different provision portfolios complements the picture.

## Provision Portfolios

As shown in the political framework of the adult and continuing education landscape in France (see chapter 3), the current policy framework offers a diverse set of measures aiming at expanding and/or ensuring learning opportunities for adults.

In order to systematize this variety, the following paragraphs highlight a selection of provision portfolios that exist for specific groups of adult learners and for specific objectives of the lifelong learning agenda.

### Adult Learners in Employment

Measures for adult learners in employment can be separated into those initiated by the employee and those initiated by both the employer and the employee.

Several types of training leave can be taken on the employee's initiative; some are:

- Individual Training Leave (*congé individuel de formation – CIF*):  
This measure differs from others in the sense that a private-sector employee can decide to attend an adult and continuing education offer irrespective of the official company training plan (*plan de formation de l'entreprise*). The specific course format (e. g. the duration (1 year maximum full-time or 1,200 hours part-time), during or outside of working hours) must nevertheless be agreed with the company. The CIF aims at obtaining a new or higher qualification, at supporting job mobility or also voluntary work activities. The respective measure, if recognized, is funded somewhere between 80 to 100 percent of the previous gross salary, e. g. by the OPACIF (*Organismes paritaires collecteurs agréés au titre du CIF*). Prerequisite is to prove the length of working relationship, meaning at least two years' salaried activity in total and including one year in the current company.
- Assessment of Competences Leave (*congé de bilan de compétences*):  
This measure allows employees to take leave to seek an assessment of their competences and general career guidance during working hours, though by an external provider. This measure is restricted to assessment, not yet formal validation of competences (see below) and may total a maximum of 24 hours' of leave. The employee needs to present at least a five year permanent working relationship with a minimum of twelve months in the current company.
- Accreditation of Prior Learning Leave (*congé pour validation des acquis de l'expérience – VAE*):  
This measure is described in more detail below; employees are entitled to maximum 24 hours of leave in order to implement the validation processes.

Initiatives of both the employer and the employee:

- Individual Learning Account (*compte personnel de formation – CPF*): Concerning the world of work, the law of May 2014 on vocational education and training, employment and social democracy is of particular importance as it aims to cover the whole working population, whether in employment, unemployed or

about to enter the job market after leaving school. Thus, an Individual Learning Account (*compte personnel de formation – CPF*) is set up at the moment of entering the world of work (as of 16 years and above). It continues in times of unemployment, parental leave, maternity leave and the like and thus genuinely ensures learning opportunities across the working life.

The CPF grants each person a certain number of teaching hours per year, varying according to whether a permanent (full-time/part-time) or a fixed-term (full-time/part-time) contract exists (permanent and full-time: 20 hours/year, up to 120 hours can be accumulated over 6 years; six-month contract in full-time: 10 hours/year).

- Period for professionalization (*période de professionnalisation – PDP*):  
The PDP, launched within the law of May 2004, can be initiated by both employer or employee and targets specific groups of employees in order to support them in keeping their jobs and employment status. Prerequisite is a permanent contract; the measure can be attended during or outside of working hours and has to be aimed at attaining one of the qualifications listed in the National Qualifications Framework (RNCP).
- Individual Adult Education Plan (*plan de formation*):  
This plan is funded by employers and linked to the current job activity and the company training plan (*plan de formation de l'entreprise*). It allows employees to attend – first and foremost short-term – further and continuing education measures during work-time; employees cannot refuse to participate.

## Job Seekers

Adult and continuing education measures targeted at unemployed persons show a similar variety. Some of them are highlighted below:

- Vocational Training Contract (*contrat de professionnalisation*):  
The Vocational Training Contract addresses in particular young people aged 16 to 25 and is aimed at assisting them to complete their initial vocational education. It is also aimed at job seekers aged 26 and older and registered at the State Employment Agency and at recipients of particular benefit schemes (*e. g. revenu de solidarité active – RSA, allocation de solidarité spécifique – ASS, allocation aux adultes handicapés – AAH*). These persons shall be supported in obtaining a vocational qualification and/or certification via the integration into a paid work-study-period of up to 24 months.
- Jobs for the future Contract (*contrat emplois d'avenir*):  
Implemented in October 2012, this measure is intended to support the (re-)integration of young people in precarious situations into society and the world of work and to lead them to a qualification. Thus, it is primarily focused on young people from 16 to 25 years of age (up to 30 years of age for persons with special needs) who neither completed education nor are in work or the vocational training system and who live in deprived urban or rural areas *e. g. the zones urbaines*

*sensibles (ZUS)* or the *zones de revitalisation rurale (ZRR)*. Their remuneration is state-subsidized and linked to a work-study-training, meaning paid work in a company and the acknowledgement and assessment of the obtained skills and experience by means of a training certificate, VAE or similar.

### **Adults with Basic Literacy Skills**

Education policy – under the responsibility of the Ministry of National Education – has been strengthening its efforts to overcome illiteracy. According to findings of the National Agency Combating Illiteracy (*Agence nationale de Lutte contre l’Illettrisme* – ANLCI) in 2011, France counts 2,500,000 people aged between 18 and 65, i. e. 7 % of the population of this age, as persons with only basic literacy skills (ANLCI, 2013). The term *illettrisme* is to be differentiated from *analphabétisme*: Whereas the latter refers to persons without any numeracy or literacy skills, adults *en situation d’illettrisme* are those who have attended some forms of schooling but left the system without numeracy and literacy skills sufficient for some aspects of daily life or the world of work.

In 1998, education policy declared combating illiteracy as national priority for the first time (*Loi d’orientation relative à la lutte contre les exclusions du 29 juillet 1998*), which provided the framework to found ANLCI as a public interest group in 2000. The role of the ANLCI is first and foremost to coordinate and support the efforts made in promoting literacy by its wide range of members, representing around 150 actors of the governmental, public and private sphere. A national framework of reference, published in 2003 (ANLCI, 2003), serves as common focal point. In 2013, declaring illiteracy as a “Great National Matter” (*Grande Cause Nationale*), a revised action plan was launched by the Ministry of National Education, focusing in particular on school education (*Agir contre l’illettrisme, l’Ecole se mobilise*) in order to strengthen schools, sensitize staff to indications of only basic literacy skills and to foster cooperation. Furthermore, France developed – as one of few countries – an own adult literacy survey, launched in 1998 (*Information et Vie Quotidienne – IVQ*), which was repeated in 2011 (cf. Jeantheau, 2015).

### **Accreditation of Prior Learning (VAE)**

The French policy framework exhibits a comparatively extensive system of recognition, validation and accreditation of prior learning – both non-formal and informal. The so-called VAE system (*Validation des Acquis de l’Expérience* – VAE = *Validation of Acquired Experience*), one of the key pillars of the French lifelong learning agenda, allows a third route besides initial formal education, further and continuing education to attaining national qualifications and diplomas.

The development of this system can be traced back to historical trajectories from the beginning of the 1970s onwards and from the launch of the further and continuing education market (see chapter 2). Following these changes, most vocational further and continuing education was organized within companies, which had the side effect of creating a dominance of company-internal job mobility. Beyond the

enterprise, employees were much less mobile regarding job transitions, a phenomenon which became particularly evident at the beginning of the 1980s against the backdrop of high youth unemployment rates and mass dismissals. Many could not provide formal evidence of their skills and competences. This led to legislation in the following years aimed at validating and recognizing non-formally and informally acquired competencies as well, yet still focused on the professional context: in 1991, introducing the *bilan de compétences*, and, in 1985 and 1992, developing with the *validation des acquis professionnels* (VAP; validation of professional skills) the preliminary stages of today's comprehensive VAE system. The latter was profoundly reformed within further and continuing education reform processes in 2002 and 2004 and is founded on comprehensive agreements between all social partners.

Prerequisite of the VAE system and implemented earlier than in many other countries was the launch of the National Qualifications Framework (*Répertoire National des Certifications Professionnelles – RNCP*) in 2002, based on the principle of learning outcomes. The Framework ensures the maintenance of an up-to-date list of professional diplomas, qualifications and titles that are still linked to the French 5-level classification of qualifications; in future, it shall allow reference to the European (*European Qualifications Framework – EQF*) and international qualification levels.

In the VAE system, responsibilities are interwoven: Whereas the quality assurance of qualification and certification procedures are managed at national level by the Ministry of National Education, the higher education and continuing training sector and its stakeholders are in charge of defining the concrete VAE processes, and the regions contribute to the funding schemes.

The VAE process allows adult learners, regardless of their employment, qualification status or age, to have their learning acquired in diverse settings (be it professional activity, voluntary work, political or cultural activities, etc.) not only assessed or recognized, but also validated via a formal qualification. The validation procedure can lead directly to the awarding of a full qualification listed in the RNCP, or to a partial award that identifies elements yet to be complemented for the achievement of a full qualification. The period of experience required for entering the VAE procedure is three years minimum. Fees are normally charged for this procedure; however, they can be (partly) waived depending on employment status and the like.

According to diverse research activities (cf. e. g. Formation Emploi 122, 2013) and empirical surveys (cf. e. g. DARES ANALYSES, 2014b), it is possible to recognize key trends of the VAE system, roughly ten years since its introduction.

Since the respective law of January 2002, the Ministries have one by one opened up their qualifications and degrees to the VAE procedures, followed also by stakeholders of the semi-/public sector like the professional chambers (*organismes consulaires*). However, the Ministry of National Education continues to be by far the main awarding body (in 2012, half of awarded certificates were issued by this Ministry).

Focusing on data available for the VAE procedures within the ministerial responsibilities (cf. ib.), it is possible to draw on the following findings:

- After a strong progression rate following its introduction in 2002, the numbers of applicants, admitted participants to the VAE procedure and, finally, recipients of an award have stabilized since the mid-2000s: In 2012, 28,677 adults received a certificate via the VAE procedure. This number has oscillated between 28,000 and 32,000 adults since 2007.
- On the way from the application stage to the awards stage there is a three-fold decrease of numbers: In 2012, there were 63,843 applicants, out of whom 48,709 were admitted to the VAE procedure and 28,677 received a certificate.
- Since its introduction, the VAE system has been used predominantly by women: In 2012, 76 percent of the participants admitted were female, applying first and foremost for qualifications in working contexts traditionally seen as “female”, namely early child support, nursing assistants and the like. Thus, qualifications of a secondary education level are the most awarded ones.
- The clear majority of applicants (70 %) is in employment.
- Within the range of about 1,300 national qualifications opened up for VAE procedures in the ministerial context, half of them were applied for in total. In the end, 48 percent of admitted participants applied for the ten most sought-after qualifications, revealing quite a narrow focus of chosen qualifications.

These participation patterns point to the general question of access to and participation in the French adult and continuing education system.

## 7. Participation

The issue of participation allows a further broadening of the outline of the French adult and continuing education arena in Metropolitan France. Beforehand, a glance at international comparative datasets offers a reference point for the empirical evidence of the French situation.

### Indications from International Comparative Surveys

In the last few years, comprehensive surveys on the European as well as on the international level have laid the foundations for gradually enlarging the inventory of international comparative data in the area of adult and continuing education.

Here, the ranking of the French results (Metropolitan France) will be indicated according to the 2014 OECD survey “Education at a Glance” (2014), the OECD Survey of Adult Skills: PIAAC (2015), and the European EUROSTAT statistics (EUROSTAT, 2013), the latter referring to recent data collected via the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and supplemented by the Adult Education Survey (AES).

Participation rates amongst adults aged 25 to 64 in formal and/or non-formal education and training activities during the twelve months prior to the survey reveal a differing grouping of France with regards to OECD (2014, p. 390) and EU-27 (EUROSTAT, 2013, p. 2) averages. Whereas the French ranking in the OECD survey was below average in 2012 (OECD average: 51 % of 25 to 64 year olds, France: 36 %), France’s position within the European family in 2011 was above the average participation and shows a higher rate (EU-27: 40.3 %; France: 50.5 %).

If the participation rate is split into non-formal and formal learning activities, the data indicate a more than evident distribution also in France: Participation is significantly lower in formal education and training offers than in non-formal ones (only about 3 %; cf. OECD, 2014, p. 397; EUROSTAT, 2013, p. 2).

Along with the majority of the EU-27 as well as the OECD countries, France has to deal with two problematic trends:

- Firstly, the strong relation of participation rates in formal and/or non-formal education and training to prior educational attainment. In France, only 28 percent of adults with a lower secondary attainment or less participated in education or training as opposed to 72.5 percent with a tertiary level qualification (cf. OECD, 2014, p. 400; see also EUROSTAT, 2013, p. 2).
- Secondly, the steady decline of participation across the age groups, leaving the 55 to 64 year olds with a significantly lower participation rate (32.8 %) than the 25 to 34 year olds (61.1 %; EUROSTAT, 2013, p. 2) (see also OECD, 2014, p. 394, chart C6.2b).



Even though the PIAAC data, the OECD Survey of Adult Skills (OECD, 2015) implemented in 2011–2012, served as basis for the OECD (2014) results above, explicit reference to the PIAAC survey sheds more light on the French situation. The PIAAC results revealed that according to adult skills (16 to 65 year olds) in literacy and in numeracy, the French mean proficiency scores are substantially below the average for OECD participating countries: In numeracy, 28 percent of the 16 to 65 year olds score a very low level proficiency (level 1 and less) in comparison to the OECD average of 19 percent; in literacy, it is 22 percent of the 16 to 65 year olds to 16 percent in OECD average (OECD, 2015; Jonas, 2013). Possible reasons are highlighted *inter alia* with regards to the substantial poor performance of the older adult learners (55 to 65 year olds) in comparison to the distribution between the age groups in other countries and with the significant influence of factors like country and language of origin, as well as the level of educational attainment (cf. Jonas, 2013).

## **French Data on Access to and Participation in Adult and Continuing Education**

The main trends in access to and participation in adult and continuing education in France mentioned above are in accordance with the data provided by INSEE for Metropolitan France (Gossiaux & Pommier, 2013).

In 2012, roughly half of all adults declared participation in at least one formal and/or non-formal learning activity in the previous twelve months (55 % of the 18 to 64 year olds) (cf. *ib.*).

Again, the proportion of non-formal learning activity is significantly higher (50 % non-formal, 11 % formal) and the decline in participation along the age groups is confirmed (80 % of the 18 to 24 year olds, 33 % of the 55 to 64 year olds) (cf. *ib.*). The latter statistic means that eight out of ten adults aged 18 to 24 years attended an adult and continuing education offer in 2012.

By gender, the participation rates are almost equal (54 % of male adults aged 18 to 64 participated, 55 % of women). Focusing the participation rates for job-related adult and continuing education activities, traditional patterns emerge (50 % of male adults, 47 % of women).

Other very common European socio-demographic patterns in access to and participation in adult and continuing education have to be highlighted also for France (cf. *ib.*), corresponding to the information set out in the chapters on financing (chapter 4), institutions (chapter 5) and provision (chapter 6):

- Working in a large company as well as holding an executive position contributes significantly to participation rates in job-related further and continuing education (participation rates in companies with more than 250 employees are twice as high as in companies with 1 to 10 employees).



- Participation rates in further and continuing education increase substantially with the level of educational attainment (participation rates of those with tertiary education are three times higher than those of people without any formal school leaving certificate).

Finally, a look is taken at the non-formal further and continuing education sector, revealing data on Metropolitan France and adults aged 18 to 64 in 2012 (see table 7).

The majority of non-formal further and continuing education offers takes place in group settings (62 %) and with a length of four to 20 hours (59 %).

Roughly 60 percent of the courses taken by employees and workers were indicated as having been obligatory and on the company's initiative, whereas this picture is different in the case of e. g. executives, who reported a higher level of self-initiative and a less obligatory character.

French classification of professions/ professional activities (PCS)	farmers, farm workers	craftspeople, shopkeepers, business owners	executives, academics in tertiary sector	intermediary professions*	employees	workers	total
<b>type (in %)</b>							
course, training, group training	75	51	51	65	67	74	62
seminar, workshop, conference	20	39	38	19	10	4	21
work-based training	5	7	9	15	22	22	16
private lessons	0	3	2	1	1	1	1
<b>length (in hours)</b>							
1–3	5	12	14	18	16	9	15
4–20	78	69	61	57	61	57	59
21 or +	17	19	25	25	24	34	26
<b>initiative (in %)</b>							
employer or organization related to the professional activity	35	41	58	73	79	83	70
individual initiative	43	57	39	24	19	17	28
other persons or institutions	21	3	2	2	2	1	2
<b>obligation (in %)</b>							
obligatory offer	9	15	36	54	59	61	49
<b>objectives (may be a combination) (in %)</b>							
improve in job	89	80	82	83	82	74	81
improve career opportunities	24	34	30	32	38	45	34
avoid loss of job	9	10	5	10	14	25	12
find a job, change job or profession	3	7	6	6	9	15	8
launch own business	3	9	3	2	2	5	3
acquire knowledge/competencies on a subject of interest	92	82	78	75	67	63	73
acquire a certification or a license	24	19	5	11	12	36	13

Example: 61 percent of workers in non-formal further and continuing education for professional purposes have participated in an obligatory offer.

\* According to the PCS (*professions et catégories socioprofessionnelles*), this category comprises inter alia teachers, social and health care workers, the clergy, sales assistants, technicians, foremen.

Table 7: Non-formal further and continuing education participated in by employees and for professional purposes in Metropolitan France (2012) (in %). Range: Metropolitan France, adults aged 18 to 64, offers started less than one year previous to the survey (Source: Author's own table based on Gossiaux & Pommier, 2013, table 3)

## 8. Staff and Professionalism

As it is the case in many other European countries, the profiles of professional adult educators in the French adult and continuing education arena are rather heterogeneous, manifold, and it is not unusual for work in adult education to be a sideline activity. All in all, empirical evidence on education and training paths of adult educators, on their employment patterns or social situation remains rudimentary.

Generally, three generic terms specifying professional activities are of vital importance and allow a first differentiation:

- *enseignant/enseignante* or *professeur*: This notion usually refers to a person performing his or her pedagogical activities in the formal school or higher education system (see chapter 9). Almost exclusively, these persons are employed as civil servants. Within the context of initial vocational education (see chapter 4), the *maître/maîtresse d'apprentissage* is an employee responsible for taking charge of young apprentices in companies.
- *formateur/formatrice* or *animateur/animateur de formation continue*: A professional adult educator employed e. g. by a company's further and continuing education unit, working as a freelancer on behalf of an enterprise or, generally, in the adult education market. Characteristically, the term refers to all activities which regard adult learners, be that guidance and counselling, organizational and administrative work in adult education centers, teaching, coaching, mentoring and the like. This professional profile is much more fluent in its standards, entrance requirements and professionalization processes than that of an *enseignant/enseignante* or *professeur*.
- *métiers de la formation*: This notion reflects the heterogeneity of the adult and continuing education professional field and is increasingly used to describe the specific professional working contexts and qualification pathways of a *formateur/formatrice*.

The profession of an adult educator as a commonly used vocational profile is, also in France, a rather modern construct, relying vitally on the establishment of the adult further and continuing education market with its financing schemes and the equal funds system after the passing of the Delors Law of 1971 (cf. Eneau, 2011; Lescure, 2015). The substantial reforms of the 1970s gave rise to a strategic approach on adults' learning pathways throughout life and also strengthened the view on adult and continuing education as a legal and political framework and an economic market. This contributed substantially to professionalization processes of adult educators and of their working contexts (see chapter 3). It gave impetus to the increasing use of the term *formateur/formatrice* as the designation of these professional activities and a source of identity between the 1970s and 1990s, not least in order to distinguish explicitly from the context of formal school education and the profile of an *enseignant/enseignante*. As things developed, there were alternating periods of

professionalization and deprofessionalization of the adult educator profile and in the field of *métiers de la formation*, yet the ambiguity of the field and of the academic discourse on professionalization continues (cf. ib.).

Today, adult educators work, as shown above, in the *métiers de la formation*, which means primarily organizational/institutional adult education settings, including companies, general adult education providers, private schools or higher education, public administration and the like. Three general lines of professional activity are characteristic:

- On a conceptual, coordinating level (*ingénierie de formation, stratégie et gestion de formation*): drafting, planning, carrying out and evaluating the provision of adult and continuing education in consideration of societal/entrepreneurial/personal supply and demand.
- On the micro-didactical level (*animation de séances de formation, ingénierie pédagogique*): developing and implementing face-to-face learning settings.
- Learner's support, guidance and counselling (*accompagnement*). (In France as elsewhere, this is distinguished from therapeutical approaches, "mere" leisure or information and the like.)

Concerning the French system of professions, adult educators are generally assigned to the professional fields of teaching, education and further education (*champs des métiers de l'enseignement, de l'éducation et de la formation*). In public statistics, a differentiation is implemented in 22 sectors of professions (*domaines professionnels*) to which 87 so-called "professional families" are pooled (*familles professionnelles* – FAP). This is based, on the one hand, on the national registry of professions (*répertoire opérationnel des métiers et des emplois* – ROME), used by the State Employment Agency (*Pôle emploi*), and, on the other hand, on the classification PCS (*professions et catégories socioprofessionnelles*), used by the INSEE (see chapter 3) for their surveys. According to this, the respective sector is "teaching, further education" (*enseignement, formation*) with its two professional profiles of: W0Z *enseignant/enseignante* and W1Z *formateur/formatrice*.

A survey of adult educators in Metropolitan France in 2012, based on such INSEE data (DARES ANALYSES, 2012), sheds some light on the French situation.

For the period of 2009–2011, an average of roughly 135,000 adult educators was counted (comprising *formateurs/formatrices, animateurs/animateuses de formation continue* and private instructors in driving schools; cf. ib., p. 659). Of these, 87 percent were employed and the majority (68 %) had a permanent contract (in 1982–1984, there had even been 84 % working with a permanent contract) (cf. ib., p. 662). Furthermore, this work takes place primarily in an organizational/institutional adult education context (65 %), which highlights the structuring role of the huge adult further and continuing education market. The latter is, as shown in chapter 5, characterized by a large number of providers that are, however, first and foremost smaller organizations; hence, 58 percent of adult educators work in entrepreneurial settings with less than ten employees, and only 15 percent with the state or public service providers (cf. ib., p. 663).

Moreover, the heterogenous working contexts and often atypical professional profiles of adult educators are reflected in the share of adult educators in a below capacity employment status (14 %). This is more than twice as high as the average for professional sectors in total (6 %) (cf. ib., p. 662) and underlines the tendency to precarious employment and living conditions (cf. Lescure, 2015).

Finally, the survey clearly indicates increasing qualification levels of adult educators. This might, again, be evidential of the structuring role of the further and continuing education market since the 1970s, and could equally reflect the general rise in the population's educational attainment levels: Whereas in the period of 1982 to 1984, 16 percent of adult educators had a higher education diploma, this share had doubled to 36 percent 25 years later (see fig. 9) (cf. DARES ANALYSES, 2012, p. 661).

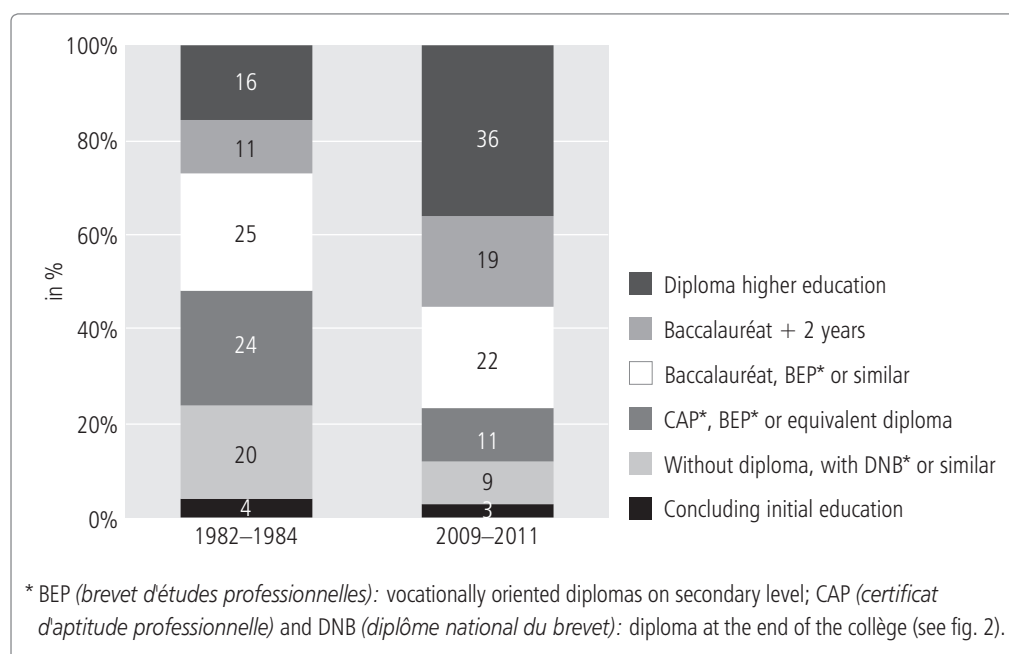


Figure 9: Qualification levels of adult educators in France (2012) (in %). Range: Metropolitan France, Labour Force Survey (Source: Author's own graph based on DARES ANALYSES, 2012, table 4)

Such qualification pathways may, as argued above, take on rather atypical forms, though they are based in every third case on a higher education diploma. The National Network of Universities preparing for the Adult and Continuing Education Professions (*Réseau National des Universités préparant aux Métiers de la Formation* – RUMEF) has ranked the different qualification pathways within the *métiers de la formation* in ascending order of their qualification level (cf. RUMEF, 2011):

- *profil formateur-animateur (baccalauréat plus two years)*
- *profil formateur-concepteur pédagogique (baccalauréat plus three years)*
- *profil responsable de formation/formateur-coordonateur (baccalauréat plus four years)*
- *profil formateur-consultant/ingénieur de formation/responsable d'organisme de formation (baccalauréat plus five years).*

These profiles lead to different diplomas (cf. ib.):

- higher education diplomas listed in the National Repository of Professional Certifications (*Répertoire national des certifications professionnelles – RNCP*): *formateur-animateur (DUFA)*, *Responsable de formation/formateur-coordonnateur (DURF, DUFRES)*;
- *licences professionnelles* (bachelor degree): *formateur-concepteur pédagogique*;
- master's degree: *formateur-consultant/ingénieur de formation/responsable d'organisme de formation*.

Accordingly, a qualification can be a bachelor's degree (*baccalauréat* plus two years, *niveau licence*) or also a master's degree (*niveau master*), e. g. a *master métiers de l'enseignement, de l'éducation et de la formation* (MEEF), provided by respective higher education institutions (*Écoles supérieures du professorat et de l'éducation – ESPE*), or more specialized e. g. by the University of Rennes 2, a *master Stratégie et ingénierie en formation des adultes (SIFA)*.

## 9. Research and Higher Education

Zooming to the European comparative level of higher education, the survey EUROSTUDENT IV (2008–2011) (Orr, Gwos, & Netz, 2011) indicates overall tendencies of higher education sectors in Europe. In a typology of social inclusiveness of higher education systems, it labels the French one – just like the German one – an “exclusive system” (ib., p. 51). This refers to being socially exclusive based on the criteria “low education group underrepresented” and “high education group with relatively high overrepresentation”.<sup>18</sup>

Taking up this message, the following chapter sheds light on main characteristics of the French research and higher education context which may not only contribute to the tendency mentioned above, but also illustrate possible impacts of the academic system on the field of adult and continuing education and its research agenda.

### Academic System

Dating back to its historical roots with the first French university founded in Paris in 1200 (*Université de Paris*), the tertiary education system in France is driven by key features, some of which are different to those in neighboring countries.

In general, and following the European Union’s Bologna Process, the system is organized into the three-tier degree structure of bachelor (*licence*, three years) – master (*master*, two years) – doctorate (*doctorat*, generally three years). Most academics in higher education have the status of *enseignant-chercheur* (“teacher-researcher”), thus, they are involved in both lecturing/teaching and research, and can follow two tenured academic grades: *maître de conférence* ((senior) lecturer) or *professeur* (professor) as the more prestigious title.

The French tertiary education system is divided into *Grandes écoles*, public universities and other higher education institutions. Unlike other countries, some *lycées* that are actually part of secondary education (see chapter 1) pertain also to the higher education system and, in doing so, extend beyond the traditional role of high schools. A range of them, mostly the largest and most prestigious, offer two further years of schooling which correspond to the first two years of higher education and which are known as preparatory classes (*classes préparatoires aux grandes écoles – CPGE*). They prepare pupils for taking entry examinations to the prestigious *Grandes écoles*.

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18 “High education/social background: Socio-economic background of a student due to his/her parents’ social standing. The parents’ social standing is approximated by their highest educational attainment according to the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 97). The highest educational attainment of either the father or the mother is taken into account. The ISCED levels 5 and 6 are considered as high social/education background. (...)The ISCED levels 0, 1 and 2 are considered as low social/education background” (Orr, Gwosć, & Netz, 2011, pp. 211–212).

- *Grandes écoles:*

Whereas public universities are obliged to accept all baccalauréat holders in their region, the *Grandes écoles* are allowed to select students according to national competition procedures (*concours*). Historically, this system stems from the meritocratic idea, according to which a republican elite is raised solely on the basis of formal educational achievement, thus ensuring *égalité* by basing the entry decision on individual performance in the *concours* (see chapter 1). Therefore, the *Grandes écoles* are under public responsibility, i. e. under one of the national ministries, and thus demand low or even no fees. For example, the *Polytechnique* (also known as “X”) is affiliated to the Ministry of Defence and students attain the status of army officers, whereas the *École Normale d’Administration (ENA)* educates France’s future elite of civil servant executives and politicians, providing the students with a civil servant status upon entry. Relatively small in size, the *Grandes écoles* generally focus on a single subject area. There exists neither a common definition nor a reference in the Code of Education nor an official list of *Grandes écoles*; only the Conference of *Grandes écoles (Conférence des Grandes Écoles)* as a non-profit organization provides some kind of systematization.

- *Universities:*

Today, France has 73 public universities. Unlike other countries, French universities are often small in size and have a wide range of affiliated establishments. This has led to restructuration processes in the last few years (2006–2012) and to the launch of local clusters of universities and other higher education institutions, known as PRES (*Pôle de recherche et d’enseignement supérieur*), not least in order to render them more visible and competitive in the international arena. In 2013, the PRES were transferred to a different cluster model (*communautés d’universités et établissements* (19 ones) or *associations* (2 ones)). Tuition fees are charged, in general amounting to 184 euros per annum for undergraduates, 256 euros per annum for post-graduate master’s degrees and 388 euros per annum for doctoral programs (academic year 2014–2015).

- *Other higher education institutions:*

This category includes private universities according to a religious denomination (e. g. Catholic universities) and a wide range of private higher education institutions offering degrees that adhere to national standards.

Recent policy reforms aimed to cluster the fragmented tertiary sector through measures developing territorial coordination of institutions and ensuring international visibility and competitiveness (see above) (*Loi n°2013-660 du 22 juillet 2013 relative à l’enseignement supérieur et à la recherche*). Furthermore, this law seeks to initiate substantial reforms by now permitting universities to offer classes taught in foreign languages to non-French-speaking foreign students (which had been prohibited by law since 1994) in order to render the universities more attractive internationally and, not least, to increase the foreign language skills of French students.



The most recent National Research Strategy, the “France Europe 2020” Agenda (MESR, 2013), puts the following aspects on the national agenda: “Health, food safety, reasoned resource management and climate change, the energy transition, mobility and sustainable urban systems, development of the digital economy and space technologies, or re-industrialisation of our territories” (ib., p. 4). In correspondence with other countries’ national research agendas, adult and continuing education – or even education in general – does not top the ranking lists. Issue 117 (2012) of *formation emploi*, issued by the CEREQ (see below), debates the diverse challenges of the French higher education sector (Formation Emploi 117, 2012a).

## Research

In order to give an insight into the present research agenda in the French adult and continuing education landscape, the following section deals with aspects raised exemplarily in chapter 2 and pays attention to issues currently highlighted by the CEREQ, the Centre for Studies and Research on Qualifications (*Centre d’études et de recherches sur les qualifications – CEREQ*). On a more general level of education sciences, the French National Centre for Scientific Research (*Centre national de la recherche scientifique – CNRS*), founded in 1939, represents the largest governmental research organization in France with a high level of influence in the research field.

Zooming to the subfield of adult and continuing education, the CEREQ is one of the most relevant research stakeholders in the arena under scrutiny. Under the joint direction of the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Labor, it implements, analyzes and disseminates research on issues of the labor market, social inclusion/exclusion in the context of education, transitions between the different fields of lifelong learning, qualifications and adult and continuing education.

Currently, the CEREQ<sup>19</sup> indicates four key areas:

1. re-/integration into the labor market/the world of work (*insertion professionnelle*);
2. professions, qualifications, competencies (*métiers, qualifications, compétences*);
3. lifelong learning (*la formation tout au long de la vie*); and
4. guidance (*orientation*).

In the category of lifelong learning,<sup>20</sup> the following issues are further highlighted:

- Provision of further and continuing education and its certifications (*l’offre de formation professionnelle et les certifications*):

This refers to the adaptation of the French adult and continuing education sector to European Union guidelines and activities, e. g. establishing the national qualification framework, an orientation on learning outcomes, strengthening the concept of competencies and the VAE system (accreditation of prior learning; see chapter 6).

19 [www.cereq.fr/index.php](http://www.cereq.fr/index.php)

20 [www.cereq.fr/themes/La-formation-tout-au-long-de-la-vie](http://www.cereq.fr/themes/La-formation-tout-au-long-de-la-vie)

- Accreditation of Prior Learning (*validation des acquis d'expérience*):  
Special emphasis is put on the complexity of such validation procedures as they are implemented within the responsibilities not only of the individual learner, but also concerning companies, the stakeholders offering guidance and counselling and those providing the respective learning possibilities and, finally, the actors in charge of the accreditation procedure itself (see chapter 6).
- Individual learners as beneficiaries of further and continuing education (*l'usage individuel de la formation continue*):  
The issue is raised that further and continuing education is implemented in a wide range of activities, including non-formal courses or also on-the-job training. However, in contrast to formal education, further and continuing education is unequally distributed: A middle-aged executive working full-time and with a permanent contract in a large company is much more likely to enjoy access to adequate information on the possibilities of lifelong learning, respective participation in further and continuing education under proper conditions and the use of his or her Individual Learning Account (*compte personnel de formation – CPF*).  
In this context, the role of the Joint Organization of Accredited Collectors (*organismes paritaires collecteurs agréés – OPCA*) has to be highlighted with regard to small and middle-sized companies.
- Professionalization of higher education (*professionalisation de l'enseignement supérieur*):  
Though this notion is referred to as ambiguous and manifold in practice, the need is seen to develop this area to a more up-to-date provision portfolio, to initiate new fields of application for diplomas and to improve the transition to e. g. the labor market. Three key principles are confirmed: pedagogical innovation, a higher social diversity of learners and collaboration with professional stakeholders and interdisciplinary approaches.
- Initial vocational training and the dual training system (*l'apprentissage et l'alternance*):  
Concerning this issue, three learning settings implemented in a dual way (*en alternance*) are listed: initial vocational education, dual learning settings in the context of formal education and as part of a job contract. Research on these topics is challenged by the diverse clientele (including learners with a diploma, with or without a school leaving certification, etc.), and no single answers can yet be derived as to whether, for example, the dual system supports the transition into employment, increases the future salary or the like.
- Vocational further and continuing education (*formation professionnelle continue*):  
Again, the challenge of participation of employees in further and continuing education is highlighted, as well as the inequalities of access to it. Key factors determining access and participation include learner's age, company size, educational background and so on, and awareness of these factors has led to the policy framework reforms being undertaken since 2014. The CEREQ continues its implementation and compilation of surveys and data on the different actors, referring to national and European datasets (CVTS; AES).

Debate on these topics takes place in journals such as *Education Permanente* (the francophone journal on adult and continuing education, founded in 1969), *Savoirs – Revue Internationale de Recherches en Education et Formation des Adultes* (the international journal for research in adult education and training, founded in 2001), *Formation Emploi – Revue française de sciences sociales* (French journal on social sciences) (issued by the CEREQ) or the *Cahiers français* (issued by *La Documentation française*, a public service publisher). The journals are flanked by handbooks, e. g. the *Encyclopédie de la formation* (Barbier, Bourgeois, Chapelle, & Ruano-Borbalan, 2009), the *Dictionnaire encyclopédique de l'éducation et de la formation* (Champy & Étévé, 2005) or the *Dico de la formation continue* (Hellouin, Boulnois, Bruneau, & Chevallier, 2007). A comprehensive, regularly updated list<sup>21</sup> of journals and books in the education sciences is provided by the French Institute of Education (*Institut français de l'Education – IFE*), which is affiliated to the *Ecole Normale Supérieure de Lyon (ENS de Lyon)*, one of the *Grandes écoles* situated in Lyon.

Besides the above, a National Network of Universities preparing for the Adult and Continuing Education Professions (*Réseau National des Universités préparant aux Métiers de la Formation – RUMEF*), founded in 2006, devotes its activities to strengthening exchange and collaboration within the academic field and between its members (2013: 16 universities). Current issues under debate are inter alia trends in the evolution of the *métiers de la formation* and the reciprocal influences with the tertiary system's role, task and agendas (see chapter 8). The aim is to further develop a reference framework for the professional field of *métiers de la formation* (cf. RUMEF, 2011) – not least in order to strengthen its profile in the transnational arena of lifelong learning activities.

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21 [http://ife.ens-lyon.fr/vst/Sommaires-revues/ListeSommaires.php?parent=sommaires&id\\_geo=F](http://ife.ens-lyon.fr/vst/Sommaires-revues/ListeSommaires.php?parent=sommaires&id_geo=F)

## 10. International Framework

The previous chapters have already revealed several linkages between the French adult and continuing education arena and the international scene:

- the participation of France in international-comparative surveys like the 2014 OECD survey “Education at a Glance” (2014) or the OECD Survey of Adult Skills: PIAAC (2015);
- its appearance in European datasets like the European EUROSTAT statistics (2013), referring to recent data collected via the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and supplemented by the Adult Education Survey (AES);
- in line with the European Union area of adult education, the adaptation to transnational policy strategies like the Bologna Process or to national/European qualification frameworks as well as participation in concerted action e. g. to increase student mobility via the ERASMUS+ programme;
- the launch of e. g. higher education reforms seeking to promote the international visibility, attractiveness and competitiveness of French universities and, at the same time, to strengthen the foreign language skills of French students.

At the national level, there are several stakeholders involved in opening up the national adult and continuing education system to the transnational sphere:

Attention is drawn, firstly, to the Directorate for European and International Relations and Cooperation (*Délégation aux relations européennes et internationales et à la coopération – DREIC*) which seeks to coordinate European and international collaboration and policies between formal education systems, universities and international research activities on behalf of the Ministry of National Education. The Directorate is part of the ministerial Secretariat-General which supports cross-cutting services; in case of the DREIC, priority is given to opening up the French education system to international dimensions and to increasing France’s esteem beyond its national borders, as well as to the progress of the French-speaking world.

Secondly, also overseen by the Ministry of National Education, the International Center for Pedagogical Studies (*Centre international d’études pédagogique – CIEP*) has to be highlighted. Founded in 1945, its activities are focused on promoting French expertise world-wide and to strengthening France’s profile globally via the internationalization of its education system. Areas of responsibility comprise the monitoring of bilateral mobility programmes, recognition of foreign and French language skills and of diplomas, reception of foreign delegations and broad information and conference activities.

Thirdly, important linkages are strengthened by the Centre Inffo, a semi-public stakeholder overseen by the Ministry of Labor. Its mission is to provide and disseminate information on current issues, research outcomes and discourses for the variety of stakeholders involved in the arena of adult and continuing education – from public services to social partners to individual learners. This includes thematic input on e. g. the European Union’s ERASMUS+ programme or the status quo of the national qualification frameworks in Europe.

Finally, in the non-profit oriented private sector, the World Committee for Lifelong Learning (*Comité mondial pour les apprentissages tout au long de la vie – CMA*) is an international non-governmental organization based in Paris that works in partnership with the UNESCO and devotes its activities (like seminars, world forums, public hearings, collaboration in networks) to fostering lifelong learning in a transnational perspective.

However, in the field of the academic discourse on adult and continuing education beyond the French context, critical voices, as in issue 1/2015 of *Savoirs*, point to the “chronic deficit” (Carré, 2015, p. 7) in the reception of the non-francophone discourse and participation in international academic settings. Inter alia the journals *Education Permanente* (the francophone journal on adult and continuing education) and *Savoirs – Revue Internationale de Recherches en Education et Formation des Adultes* (the international journal for research in adult education and training) play an important role in tackling the aspect of adult and continuing education in a transnational horizon.

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## Universities

List of <i>communautés d'universités et établissements</i> and of <i>associations</i> in France (2015) <sup>27</sup>			
<b>Communautés d'universités et établissements (ComUE)</b>			
<b>Name ComUE</b>	<b>Founded</b>	<b>Previous PRES (Pôle de recherche et d'enseignement supérieur)</b>	<b>Link</b>
Normandie Université	2014	PRES Normandie Université (2011)	<a href="http://www.normandie-univ.fr">www.normandie-univ.fr</a>
Université Paris-Saclay	2014	PRES UniverSud Paris (2007)	<a href="http://www.universite-paris-saclay.fr/fr">www.universite-paris-saclay.fr/fr</a>
Université de Grenoble	2014	PRES Université de Grenoble (2009)	<a href="http://www.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr">www.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr</a>
Institut polytechnique du Grand Paris	2014	PRES Collegium Ile-de-France (2012)	<a href="http://ipgrandparis.fr/fr">http://ipgrandparis.fr/fr</a>
Université Paris Lumières	2014	PRES Université Paris Lumières (2012)	<a href="http://www.u-plum.fr">www.u-plum.fr</a>
Université Sorbonne Paris Cité	2014	PRES Université Paris Cité (2010)	<a href="http://www.sorbonne-paris-cite.fr">www.sorbonne-paris-cite.fr</a>
Languedoc-Roussillon Universités	2014	PRES Université Montpellier Sud de France (2009)	<a href="http://www.languedoc-roussillon-universites.fr">www.languedoc-roussillon-universites.fr</a>
Université de Lyon	2015	PRES Université de Lyon (2007)	<a href="http://www.universite-lyon.fr">www.universite-lyon.fr</a>
Université Paris-Est	2015	PRES Université Paris-Est (2007)	<a href="http://www.univ-paris-est.fr/fr">www.univ-paris-est.fr/fr</a>
Université Paris-Seine	2015	PRES Université du Grand Ouest Parisien (2012)	<a href="http://www.universiteparisseine.fr">www.universiteparisseine.fr</a>
Université Côte d'Azur	2015		<a href="http://univ-cotedazur.fr/english">http://univ-cotedazur.fr/english</a>
Université Bourgogne – Franche-Comté	2015	PRES Bourgogne Franche-Comté (2010)	<a href="http://www.pres-bourgogne-franche-comte.fr">www.pres-bourgogne-franche-comte.fr</a>
Communauté d'universités et établissements d'Aquitaine	2015	PRES Université de Bordeaux (2007)	<a href="http://www.cue-aquitaine.fr">www.cue-aquitaine.fr</a>
Université de recherche Paris sciences et lettres	2015	PRES Paris Sciences et Lettres – Quartier latin (2010)	<a href="http://www.univ-psl.fr/default/EN/all/psl_fr/index.htm">www.univ-psl.fr/default/EN/all/psl_fr/index.htm</a>
Université de Reims Champagne-Ardenne	2015	PRES Université fédérale européenne Champagne Ardenne Picardie (2012)	<a href="http://www.univ-reims.fr">www.univ-reims.fr</a>
Université fédérale de Toulouse Midi-Pyrénées	2015	PRES Université de Toulouse (2012)	<a href="http://www.univ-toulouse.fr">www.univ-toulouse.fr</a>
Sorbonne Universités	2015	PRES Sorbonne Universités (2010)	<a href="http://www.sorbonne-universites.fr">www.sorbonne-universites.fr</a>
Université confédérale Léonard de Vinci	2015	PRES Limousin Poitou-Charentes (2009) and Centre – Val de Loire Université (2010)	<a href="http://www.cvluniversite.fr">www.cvluniversite.fr</a>
Université Bretagne-Loire	2015		<a href="https://lunam.ueb.eu">https://lunam.ueb.eu</a>
<b>Associations</b>			
Site alsacien porté par l'université de Strasbourg	2015		<a href="http://www.unistra.fr/index.php?id=accueil">www.unistra.fr/index.php?id=accueil</a>
Site clermontois porté par l'université Clermont-II	2015	PRES Clermont Université (2008)	<a href="http://www.univ-bpclermont.fr">www.univ-bpclermont.fr</a>

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## Abstract

The European arena of lifelong learning offers rich country-specific portfolios of historical trajectories, policy frameworks and practical evidence of adult and continuing education. This book provides an introduction to the case of France and outlines the key features of the French system alongside issues such as political and legal agendas, schemes of participation, provision and financing or trends in professionalization, research areas and transnational linkages. Through the lens of adult and continuing education, the author invites researchers, practitioners, students and persons interested in international-comparative perspectives to a *tour d'horizon* of the French lifelong learning landscape.

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## Adult and Continuing Education in France

This publication gives an overview of central aspects of adult and continuing education in France. Silke Schreiber-Barsch presents a range of data and information regarding adult and continuing education institutions, financing, provision, participation, staff, and certification processes.

The author describes adult and continuing education in France taking into consideration the political, geographical, and cultural context as well as the current economic situation.

This book offers a brief and systematic introduction and guides the reader through the system of adult and continuing education in France.